Influence of Identity on Domestic Violence Response: A Study of Black Muslim Women

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To my parents, Alao & Muyibat Oyewuwo, who are the children of the Oyewuwo and Edidi lineages, and whose blood I am proud to have run through my veins

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OBOG

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of the intersectionality of race, gender, and religious identity on black Muslim women's domestic violence coping process. The study was guided by the overarching question, *how does a black Muslim woman's identity influence how she responds to domestic violence?* This question was examined through the investigation of the following sub-questions: *1) how does she experience domestic violence? 2) how does she cope with it?*

In chapter one, I examine the problem of domestic violence by highlighting prevalence rates, the history of the domestic violence movement, and introducing domestic violence in the American Muslim community. In chapter two, I introduce the theoretical framework. I define intersectionality and coping theories and provide a conceptual diagram based on the literature of the relationship between these theories. In chapter three, I describe how grounded theory methodology was employed, and also include a description of my analyses, recruitment strategies, and a description of the study sample. In chapters four, five, and six I discuss the findings of the study. Chapter four describes the types of abuse women reported experiencing and how they came to recognize they were in an abusive relationship. In chapter five, I describe women's coping processes, identifying that women coped in four ways: seeking help, saying no, pacifying, and leaving. In chapter six, I describe how women's coping processes are tied to their individualized conceptualizations of what it means to be a "Good Muslim Woman," a contested identity construction that had consequences and was shaped by gender socialization; this socialization was shaped by religious and cultural teachings as well as structural concerns of racism, sexism, Islamophobia, and their intersection. In Chapter 7, I discuss the study's

relevance to current literature and highlight the implications for social work research and education, policy, and community.

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of the intersectionality of race, gender, and religious identity on black Muslim women's domestic violence coping process. The study was guided by the overarching question, *how does a black Muslim woman's identity influence how she responds to domestic violence?* This question was examined through the investigation of the following sub-questions: *1) how does she experience domestic violence? 2) how does she cope with it?*

In this opening chapter, I examine the problem of domestic violence by highlighting prevalence rates, the history of the domestic violence movement, and the issue of domestic violence in the American Muslim community.

A. Statement of the Problem

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in 2011 that approximately 1 in 3 women "have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime" (Black et al., 2011, p. 2). Domestic violence is a problem that affects communities in the United States and around the world. While the violence that occurs outside the home directly affects the public sphere, the violence that occurs inside the home is also significant and deserves scholarly attention. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that between 1993 and 2002, violence between family members accounted for 1 in 10 of all violence victimizations in the United States (Durose et al., 2005). Women are the primary victims of this violence; between 1998 and 2002, 73% of all family violence victims were female, and males accounted for 75.6% of all family violence perpetrators. During the same time period, 22% of all murders were a result of family violence, and females made up 58% of family violence murder victims.

The numbers related to violence between intimate partners are especially startling. Between 1998 and 2002, of the "3.5 million violent crimes committed against family members, 49% were crimes against spouses" (Durose et al., 2005, p.1). Women made up 84% of spouse abuse victims and 86% of dating violence victims. The prevalence of domestic violence is high, with major reports concluding that 25.5% of women in the United States have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) and 5.3 million incidences of victimizations occur toward women ages 18 and older in the United States each year (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). Nearly 1 in 5 women in the United States have been raped in their lifetime, over half of whom report being raped by an intimate partner (Black et al. 2011). Between 2001 and 2005, victimizations by an intimate partner made up 22% of all nonfatal victimizations against females compared to 4% of all nonfatal victimizations against males. Ninety-six percent of women who experienced nonfatal domestic violence between 2001 and 2005 were victimized by men (Catalano, 2007).

While the overall rate of domestic violence decreased from 1994-2010, this rate of decrease was higher for males than females (Catalano, 2007, 2012; Truman & Morgan, 2014). Women are still more likely than men to experience nonfatal domestic violence (Catalano, 2007) and sexual assault (Rand, 2009), and females accounted for four out of every five victims of domestic violence between 1994 and 2010 (Catalano, 2012). In a study of 8,000 men and 8,000 women, women were found to experience higher frequencies of physical, sexual, and stalking victimization than men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). In 1995, 1,252 women were killed by an intimate partner (Max, Rice, Finkelstein, Bardwell, & Leadbetter, 2004; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003); in 2007, the estimated number of female intimate partner fatalities was 1,640 (Catalano, Smith, Snyder, & Rand, 2009). One study found that 30% of all

female homicides are committed by an intimate partner, while domestic violence accounts for 5% of homicides committed against males (Catalano, 2007).

Women experience multiple forms of domestic violence. In a retrospective telephone survey study conducted between 2003 and 2005, 44% of the women reported experiencing domestic violence as adults and 11.7% reported experiencing domestic violence in the past 5 years. Women reported experiencing multiple types of abuse; 69.2% of women who reported physical violence also reported experiencing another type of domestic violence, including forced sex or some other form of sexual contact. Twenty-one percent of women reported being abused by two or more partners in their lifetime (Thompson et al., 2006).

Domestic violence also has an economic impact. Victims of domestic violence lose a total of 8 million days of work and 5.6 days of household work a year due to the violence they experience (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). Domestic violence costs exceed $5.8 billion annually (Max et al., 2004; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003), $4.1 billion of which goes to direct care and mental health services (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). In 1995, total medical costs of domestic violence were $2.6 billion, 94% of which were for victims of physical assault (Max et al., 2004).

Although the information available on the statistics of domestic violence is plentiful, these crimes are often underreported or reporting is delayed. Between 1998 and 2002, approximately "three-fourths of all family violence occurred in or near the victim's residence" (Durose et al., 2005, p.1); between 2001 and 2005, two-thirds of domestic victims (male and female) were victimized at home (62% for females, 60% for males) (Catalano, 2007). The fact that much of the violence occurs in the home, a setting viewed as a private sphere, may contribute to the delay in reporting. Durose et al (2005) found the most frequent reason for lack

of reporting (34%) was victims' belief that domestic violence is a personal/private matter; 12% of victims did not report in order to protect the offender.

B. Resisting Domestic Violence

The battered women's movement, informed by both the feminist and the anti-rape movements, emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s (Schechter, 1982). The feminist movement raised political consciousness about gender inequality and oppression both in private and public spheres. The anti-rape movement began the establishment of formulized services for survivors, including rape crisis centers, shelters, as well as legal and medical advocacy (Riger, et al., 2002). Through engagement in informal networks and feminist national and state meetings, women discovered the prevalence and commonality of domestic violence experiences among themselves. This discovery propelled the battered women's movement forward.

Even prior to formal organizing, women who had formerly experienced or witnessed abuse opened their homes to other victims. The establishment of such safe havens as well as increased networking and dialogue led to the establishment of shelters specifically for victims of domestic violence. Hundreds of domestic violence shelters and services emerged throughout the country in the mid-to-late 1970s. Women also established coalitions and worked through informal and formal networks sharing information and organizing to stop the violence (Schechter, 1982).

The battered women's movement pushed for policy change, particularly changes in the criminal justice system. In 1976, advocates filed lawsuits against police departments for avoiding arrest in domestic violence cases (SafeNetwork: California's Domestic Violence Resource & Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse, 2009). In 1979, the US Department

of Health and Human Services established the Office on Domestic Violence. In Chicago the same year, advocates founded the Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network.

However, in 1981, the Reagan administration dismantled the Office of Domestic Violence, leading to a loss of funding for domestic violence programs. Despite this, there were positive state legislative responses to domestic violence, and in the following year, the Illinois Domestic Violence Act came into effect. In 1994, the U.S. Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), taking a national stance that domestic violence and other forms of violence against women is unacceptable and illegal. VAWA provides funding for victims of rape and domestic violence, and allows victims to seek legal action for the crimes committed against them. Additionally, the Act provides funding for domestic violence training of law enforcement and court officials.

C. Study Rationale & Significance

Despite efforts to address domestic violence, disparities in prevalence and incidence rates exist. For example, studies have shown that there are significant differences in domestic violence rates among racial groups. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that between 1994 and 2010, the rates of domestic violence decreased for all racial and ethnic groups included in the survey (White, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latina, and Other); however, Blacks/African Americans still had the highest rate of domestic violence in 2010 as compared to any other racial and ethnic group (7.8 per 1000 persons over age 12; compared to Whites: 6.2, Hispanic/Latina: 4.1, and Other: 3.8) (Catalano, 2012). Twenty-two percent of Black women, 18% of White women, and 14.6% of Hispanic women have experienced rape in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011). In a five-year study conducted between 1995 and 2000 of Black, White, and Hispanic couples, Black and Hispanic couples were found to have higher recurrences of

domestic violence than White couples, and only White couples had a lower prevalence of domestic violence in 2000 than in 1995 (Caetano, Field, Ramisetty-Mikler & McGrath, 2005). Between 1994 and 2005, police reporting of intimate partner victimization of females increased, and between 2001 and 2005, police reporting of intimate partner violence was higher for Black females than for White females (Catalano, 2007).

While the United States has addressed domestic violence in the formulation of organizations and the establishment of laws, various factors can influence how a woman copes with the violence she is experiencing. Factors that influence coping include the frequency and severity of physical abuse, the length of the relationship, access to available resources, social support, and the effectiveness of previous coping strategies (Waldrop & Resick, 2004). However, social identity and the discrimination one has based on her social identity, such as racism, classism, and sexism, also influences how one responds to domestic violence (Bograd, 1999; Richie, 2005). How identity influences a woman's experience of domestic violence and her response to domestic violence requires further exploration.

Richie (2012), a black feminist scholar and activist, questioned domestic violence advocates' focus on individual services as a response to domestic violence without a focus on other structures that continue to marginalize women and make them vulnerable to abuse. For social work to effectively address the violence women experience, we must examine and address individual experiences and the larger structural oppressions that shape domestic violence (Gilfus, Trabold, O'Brien, & Fleck-Henderson, 2010; Bogard, 2005). An intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1991) links the personal to the multiple overlapping structural oppressions (i.e. racism, sexism) that women face, and has the potential to begin to uncover the realities of domestic violence for all groups, including black Muslim women. This perspective can not only

help improve services, helping us move towards cultural competence, but may even challenge the paradigm of service delivery and the role of social workers in the lives of survivors of abuse (Lockhart & Danis, 2010).

While scholars have examined the influence of race and class on domestic violence experience, less examined is the role of religion and religious identity. Researchers have found that religious and spiritual practices serve as a source of personal comfort and strength (Yick, 2008; Hassouneh-Phillips, 2003), but some women experience discrimination because of their religion. An example of this is the rise of Islamophobia in post-9/11 America. Muslim women have reported facing discrimination when seeking domestic violence services. In one account, "[shelter] administrators urged [a woman] to throw off her veil, saying it symbolized the male oppression native to Islam that she wanted to escape" (MacFarquhar, 2008, p.12). This lack of religious understanding presents a barrier in how women respond to domestic violence. Further, depending on their cultural or ethnic background, Muslim women may face additional barriers including language and cultural assumptions made on the part of practitioners (Faizi, 2001; Graham, Bradshaw, & Trew, 2009). In addition, women may not seek services at non-Muslim run shelters because they feel they cannot relate to the other women in shelters (Faizi, 2001). Muslim women, therefore, may delay seeking services until their situations become dire.

1. Domestic violence and American Muslims

The first study of domestic violence in the American Muslim community was conducted in 1999 by Sharifa Al-Khateeb, who is considered the leader of the anti-violence movement in the Muslim Community in the United States. Al-Khateeb (1999) found that domestic violence occurred in 10% of Muslim homes, but believed that this rate was likely much higher.

The Muslim population in the United States is estimated at 2.6 million people (Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2011), 65% of whom are foreign-born (Pew Research Center, 2007). In 2009, Gallup reported that American Muslims "are the most racially diverse religious group surveyed in the United States" (Gallup, 2009, p. 10). The three largest ethnic groups of American Muslims are Arabs (24%), African Americans (20%), and South Asians (18%) (Pew Research Center, 2007); however American Muslim are also comprised of Europeans, Iranians, Africans, Latinos, and Caucasian-Americans. When combined with the concentration of African Muslims (4%), black[1] Muslims and Arab Muslims tie for the largest racial/ethnic group of Muslims in the United States. Other reports have identified that black Muslims (not differentiating between African and African American) make up 35% of the American Muslim community (Younis, 2009).

Although black Muslims make up a large portion of the American Muslim population, there is limited literature on their domestic violence experiences. There is emerging research on the role of religion and spirituality for black women who have experienced domestic violence (Potter, 2007; Hodges & Cabanilla, 2011; Fowler, Faulkner, Learman, & Runnels, 2011), but the samples in these studies often include a Christian majority. Alkhateeb and Abugideiri (2007) argue that "the intersection of culture and religion, socioeconomic status, political history, and a history of patriarchal oppression related to cultural practices of family violence in particular, needs further study by Muslims" (p. 21). My study aims to fill these gaps.

The following study examines the experiences and coping responses of an ethnically diverse sample of black Muslim women from an intersectional perspective. Through the use of

[1] "Black Muslim" is a term often used to refer to members of a particular sect of Islam known as the Nation of Islam (NOI). In this study "black Muslim" refers to a racial group of Muslims, not any particular Muslim ideological group; thus, I use "black" to make a clear distinction between the racial categorization and members of the NOI.

qualitative, grounded theory methodology, I answer the following research question, *how does a black Muslim woman's identity influence how she responds to domestic violence?* This question is examined through the investigation of the following sub-questions: *1) how does she experience domestic violence? 2) how does she cope with it?*

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I critically examine the literature on women's responses to domestic violence. Three bodies of literature inform this section: (1) theories of domestic violence, (2) studies of domestic violence coping, and (3) studies of domestic violence within the African immigrant, African American, black, and Muslim communities. I conclude by addressing the limitations of our current knowledge and presenting the theoretical framework that guides the present study.

A. Theories of Domestic Violence

Theories of why abuse occurs and the agency of women have influenced the study of domestic violence responses. Scholars have categorized theories of domestic violence in different ways. The following section will critically examine three categories of domestic violence theory: psychological, sociological, and feminist.

1. Psychological theories

Psychological theories attempt to explain women's responses to abuse, most frequently questioning why women stay in abusive relationships. The most common psychological theories are learned helplessness, battered woman syndrome, and the cycle of violence. Martin Seligman (Brewster, 2002; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Walker, 1989) developed learned helplessness theory, and Walker (1989) applied the theory to the domestic violence context. According to the theory, a woman experiencing domestic violence is unable to leave the relationship because she feels she does not have enough control over her situation to leave or she has become apathetic (Brewster, 2002; Kelly 2011; Walker, 1989). Walker (1984) also proposed the cycle of violence theory. This theory states that domestic violence is cyclical and happens in three stages: tension-building phase, acute battering incident phase, and honeymoon phase. The

battered woman syndrome (Walker, 1984) asserts that women stay in the abusive relationships because they believe they cannot escape and thus have no choice but to stay in the relationship. Because of the cycle of violence, the woman continues to lose hope and is unable to deal with the violence or escape it.

Major limitations of psychological theories include the assumption that leaving is the only appropriate response and that all other responses are passive. These theories also have a deficit orientation. Dobash and Dobash (1992) identify a major limitation to the cycle of violence theory as,

> the conception of a cycle of violence is static rather than dynamic and changing, does not deal with intentionality, and the notion of the third phase as a 'honeymoon' phase belies the experience of women who indicate that even the process of 'making-up' or reconstructing the relationship is carried out against the background of a personal history of violence and coercion and in the context of few viable alternatives to the violent relationship (p. 223).

Kelly (2011) argues, "coping with the abuse is an active process that involves creativity, problem solving, and strategizing" (p. E39). Learned helplessness theory also ignores contextual factors that contribute to the decision to leave, such as age, resources, and social support (Flannery & Harvey, 1991). Studies of coping that ground their work in psychological theories often lead to conclusions that blame the victim for the abuse.

2. Family violence theory

A predominant sociological theory is family systems theory, referred to here as family violence theory. Family violence theory proposes that violence is a systemic production, rather than that of an individual one (Straus, 1973, p.105) as posited by psychological theories. Family violence theory focuses on family members and their interactions with one another. Families' resistance to change, role expectation, and poor communication maintain battering. Tolan, Gorman-Smith, and Henry (2006) indicate that the perspective does not address "how to

incorporate into the definition of family violence the gender inequities and dependence differences related to power within family relationships" (p. 562). This limitation is particularly problematic because the work to unveil the problem of domestic violence has centered on showing the prevalence of male to female violence. Johnson (2000), attempted to clarify this gap by creating a typography of violence defined by degrees of aggression. Family violence research on perpetration of violence suggests that there is little gender difference; however, family violence research has found differences in aggression by gender (Tolan et al., 2007).

A limitation of family violence theory is that it "minimize[s] the responsibility if the perpetrator and exaggerates the responsibility of the victim" (Kelly, 2011, p. E36). Further, family systems theory views the violence that occurs between couples as the same as the violence that occurs between other members of the family system, ignoring the role of structural factors, such as patriarchy, on violence (Gilfus, et al., 2010).

3. Feminist theory

Feminist theory posits that domestic violence exists because of the patriarchal structure of society that supports gender inequities and maintains male dominance and power (Brewster, 2002; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Gilfus et al., 2010; Kelly, 2011; McPhail, Busch, Kulkami, & Rice, 2007, Schecter, 1982). Additionally, inequality at the structural level influences intimate relationships, and men replicate male dominance. This theory connects personal experience to the larger structures of society, focusing on gender as a system of oppression. The feminist perspective has had a significant impact on addressing domestic violence, and "[t]his analysis has become the conceptual basis for the most widely accepted definitions of [domestic violence] used in developing public policies and standard intervention practice for both victims and perpetrators of [domestic violence]" (Gilfus et al., 2010, p. 2).

A critique of feminist theory has been that it essentializes gender and male-to female violence, often leaving out the experience of women of color and failing to explain domestic violence in same-sex relationships. As such feminist theorists have begun to shift from a universalist lens to one that examines other aspects of identity. The Integrative Feminist Model (McPhail et al., 2007) is one such evolution. It progresses feminist theory by incorporating other theories, alternative interventions, and other aspects of social identity such as race, class, and sexual orientation. McPhail et al note that this perspective retains a gendered analysis of domestic violence.

B. Intersectionality

Intersectionality is both a theoretical framework and methodology (Bowleg, 2008; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Cole, 2009; McCall, 2005; Seng, Lopez, Sperlich, Hamama, & Meldrum, 2012, Conwill, 2010; Simien, 2007) that examines "how multiple social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, [socioeconomic status], and disability intersect at the micro level of individual experience to reflect interlocking systems of privilege and oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism) at the macro social-structural level" (Bowleg, 2012, p.1267). Black women first introduced the concept of intersectionality in the 19th century. In 1832, political scholar Maria Stewart, and in 1851 abolitionist and freed slave Sojourner Truth, called attention to the influence of race, gender, and class in shaping black women's experiences (Bowleg, 2012; Jordan-Zachery, 2007). In 1977, the Combahee River Collective, a group of black lesbian feminists, pushed for examination of the intersection of social identities and oppression (Cole, 2009; Mehrotra, 2013). They stated in their manifesto, "we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of an integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of

oppression are interlocking" (The Combahee River Collective, 1977). Patricia Hill Collins (1990) expanded these ideas and delineated "black feminist epistemology" in her book *Black Feminist Thought.*

Building on black feminist thought, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), a law professor and black feminist, coined the term "intersectionality". In 1991, Crenshaw expanded on intersectional thought, affirming that feminist and anti-racist essentialism further marginalize women of color who are victims of domestic violence and rape in two ways. First, along with gender, other dimensions of a woman's social identity shape her experience of victimization, such as race and class. Ignoring these dimensions leads to a limited understanding of women's experiences and needs. Secondly, seeing only one identity (i.e. race or gender) as essential ignores within group differences and breeds tension between identity groups, leaving women of color to choose a side. An intersectional lens bridges seemingly independent identity constructions and more holistically examines the needs and experiences of women who experience oppression at the intersection.

1. Intersectionality & domestic violence

Researchers have started to use an intersectional lens of domestic violence, examining how race, class, gender, and other systems of oppression influence a woman's experience of domestic violence (Raj & Silverman, 2002; Yoshioka & Choi, 2005; Kasturiragan, Krishnan, & Riger 2004). Scholars have also formulated new visual representations of the "Power & Control Wheel" (Pence, 1983). The original Power & Control Wheel focuses on the interpersonal experience of violence and is the preeminent tool used to show how domestic violence operates. Chavis and Hill (2009) offer a re-conceptualization of the power and control wheel that links structural factors to the individual level experience of domestic violence. In

their revision, the original, interpersonal violence-focused power and control wheel remains central while various forms of discrimination, i.e. sexism, ageism, ableism, encircle the wheel. Named the Multicultural Wheel, their diagram considers both personal and structural experience, and offers a visual representation of an intersectional analysis of domestic violence.

Scholars have identified some limitations of intersectionality. Tomlinson (2013) noted that intersectionality depersonalizes and collectivizes social groups. Nash (2008) added that intersectionality research lacks a defined methodology, clear definition, and uses "black women as quintessential intersectional objects" (p.1). Further, while domestic violence research is expanding to include diversity of social location, very few studies have actually used an intersectional framework to study domestic violence (Erez & Bach, 2003; Erez, Adelman, & Gregory, 2009; Thiara, Hauge, & Mullender, 2011). The limitations of intersectionality are not a critique of its relevance, but rather a call to improve the way scholars use intersectionality as a lens of inquiry.

2. Three approaches to intersectionality

How to study intersectionality is an ongoing challenge for scholars. Of particular difficulty is conceptualizing and analyzing social identity categories. McCall (2005) identified three intersectionality approaches that lie on a continuum based on "how they understand and use analytical categories to explore the complexity of intersectionality in social life" (p. 1773). The approaches are not mutually exclusive, but each approach has distinct philosophical underpinnings.

At one end of the continuum is anticategorical complexity, "based on a methodology that deconstructs analytical categories" (McCall, 2005). Closely aligned with poststructuralist feminist theories, this stance predicates that we cannot fully reduce social identity categories to a

single entity, as diversity will always exist within any given identity category (McCall, 2005; Mehrotra, 2010). Further, social categories are not real; rather, we have created the categories through language. As a result, we can and should challenge using such categories as fixed entities.

At the opposite end of the continuum is intercategorical (also referred to as categorical) complexity (McCall, 2005). In this perspective, researchers "provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions" (p. 1773). Intercategorical approaches are comparative and examine the relationship among multiple social groups within and across analytical categories (McCall, 2005; Mehrotra, 2010)

Intracategorical complexity falls in the middle of the continuum (McCall, 2005). The intracategorical approach was introduced by black feminists and initiated the study of intersectionality (McCall, 2005; Mehrotra, 2010). Similar to anticateorical approaches, it questions the social construction of identity categories. Parallel to the intercategorical approach however, intracategorical approaches recognize the durability of social categories and the consequences of such categorizations on people's lives at any point in time. Scholars using this approach "tend to focus on particular social groups at neglected points of intersection…in order to reveal the complexity of lived experience within such groups" (McCall, 2005, p. 1774).

3. Intersectionality and the present study

In the present study, I use intersectionality to understand the construction of identity and the experiences people have based on their identity. Crenshaw (1991) asserted that her goal in introducing intersectionality was not to create a new identity theory. However, intersectionality does "highlight the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when

considering how the social world is constructed" (p. 1245). I will use intersectionality to understand how black Muslim women see themselves in relationship to the world and how they believe the world sees them. Further, intersectionality allows me to be upfront about the existence of systems of oppression and their connection to human experience.

More specifically, I adopt an intracategoriacal approach to intersectionality. I believe that social identity categories are neither fixed nor homogenous. However, I also believe that such categorizations are "real," meaning they have actual implications for people's experiences and interactions, and thus should be critically examined. Further, I am focusing both on a group (black Muslim women) and the intersection of analytical categories (deductively, race, gender, and religion) that are only just beginning to emerge in the literature. Intracategorical studies are typically conducted in the form of narratives and case studies (McCall, 2005; Mehrotra, 2010) focusing primarily on the micro level of the ecosystem. As a result, I employ a multi-level analysis of intersectionality that incorporates the intracategorical approach but also transcends the individual by examining identity constructions, symbolic representations, and social structures (Winker & Degele, 2011). I discuss details of how I conduct this analysis in the Methodology chapter.

a. Deductive identity categories

While I plan to allow other aspects of identity to emerge, I am deductively focusing on the intersection of race, religion, and gender. The following sections will briefly describe how I define each construct in the study.

1) Race

Race is a socially defined, socially ascribed, and socially constructed way of designating people in society (Helms, 1994; Scott, 2012) that is based on

phenotypical categorizations (Scott, 2012) that are used to make assumptions of "people's character, intellectual capacity, and patterns of behavior" (Markus & Moya, 2010, p. 22).

Shelby (2009) distinguishes between two conceptualizations of blackness: thick and thin. The thin conceptualization of blackness is that in which "black" is viewed as a racial category that is imposed by society, similar to the aforementioned definitions of race. As such, one does not have to recognize her own blackness to be black; simply put, "[i]f, say, one were to assimilate completely to so-called white culture, one's thin blackness would nevertheless remain intact, for cultural conversion provides no escape" (p. 208). The thick conceptualization of blackness can include the thin conceptualization, but moves "deeper" in a way that is more characteristic of cultural or group belonging. It can be altered or adopted. Shelby argues that while a thick conceptualization implies some level of inner-group unity, it is not necessary, and can be detrimental to, black solidarity and emancipation.

The present study examines the experiences and coping of women who identify with the racial category of "black," and I adopt a thin conceptualization of blackness. As I sought an ethnically and culturally diverse sample, "blackness" may not be similarly experienced and defined across the sample. I investigate how race shapes and is shaped by other social identities to influence a woman's experience of domestic violence and coping.

2) Ethnicity and culture

Cultural and ethnic identity also influences racial experience. While research on race and domestic violence is emerging, less is known about the role of ethnicity and culture within racial categories (Bograd, 1999; Chavis & Hill, 2009). Several ethnic and cultural groups fit into the black racial category as defined by the U.S. Census. These ethnic categories may include Africans, African Americans, Caribbeans, Latinas, etc. Such

groups are of African descent, meaning that they have ties to the African continent; they or their ancestors either came to the United States by force (in the case of slavery or fleeing persecution and violence from their home country) or voluntarily (in the case of immigrants seeking opportunity in the United States).

Scholars have described ethnicity as being under the umbrella of culture (Scott, 2012; Helms, 1994). Ethnicity is "a social identity based on the culture of one's ancestors' national or tribal groups as modified by the demands of the culture in which one's group currently resides" (Helms, 1994, p. 293). Ethnicity is determined by social and cultural characteristics (Scott, 2012; Helms, 1994).

Scholars define culture more broadly. Helms (1994) argues that there are two constructs to culture, a macro-culture and sub-cultures. The macro-culture refers to the dominant cultures' worldview, whereas sub-culture refers to the customs and traditions of people in different groups of the dominant culture. Ethnicity and culture can influence how a person defines their identity; therefore, ethnicity and culture are included as constructs in this study.

3) Gender

While domestic violence affects both men and women, women are disproportionally affected as indicated by national studies and statistics. For example, women experience higher rates of victimization and more severe victimization in intimate relationships (Black et al., 2011; Catalano 2007; 2012). Consequently, this disproportionality has kept gender at the center of domestic violence research analysis.

Gender is socially constructed, and gender is learned through socialization processes and interactions; "gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life" (Lorber, 2014). Gender is an important and

critical concept of the study of domestic violence, and as such, the experiences women face based on their gender categorization and how this influences their coping is a focus of my analysis. Additionally, how gender identity is shaped by other intersecting identities such as race and religion is also examined.

4) Religion

Religion and religious identity is also a focus of this study. I examine the influence of being Muslim, defined by being a follower of the religion of Islam and self-identifying as Muslim, on women's experience of domestic violence and their response to the violence. I also examine how religion influences other aspects of identity.

b. Visual representation of intersectionality

The following diagram serves as a visual description of intersectionality and its influence on women's experience of domestic violence based on current literature (Figure 1), and it served as a beginning framework to guide this study.

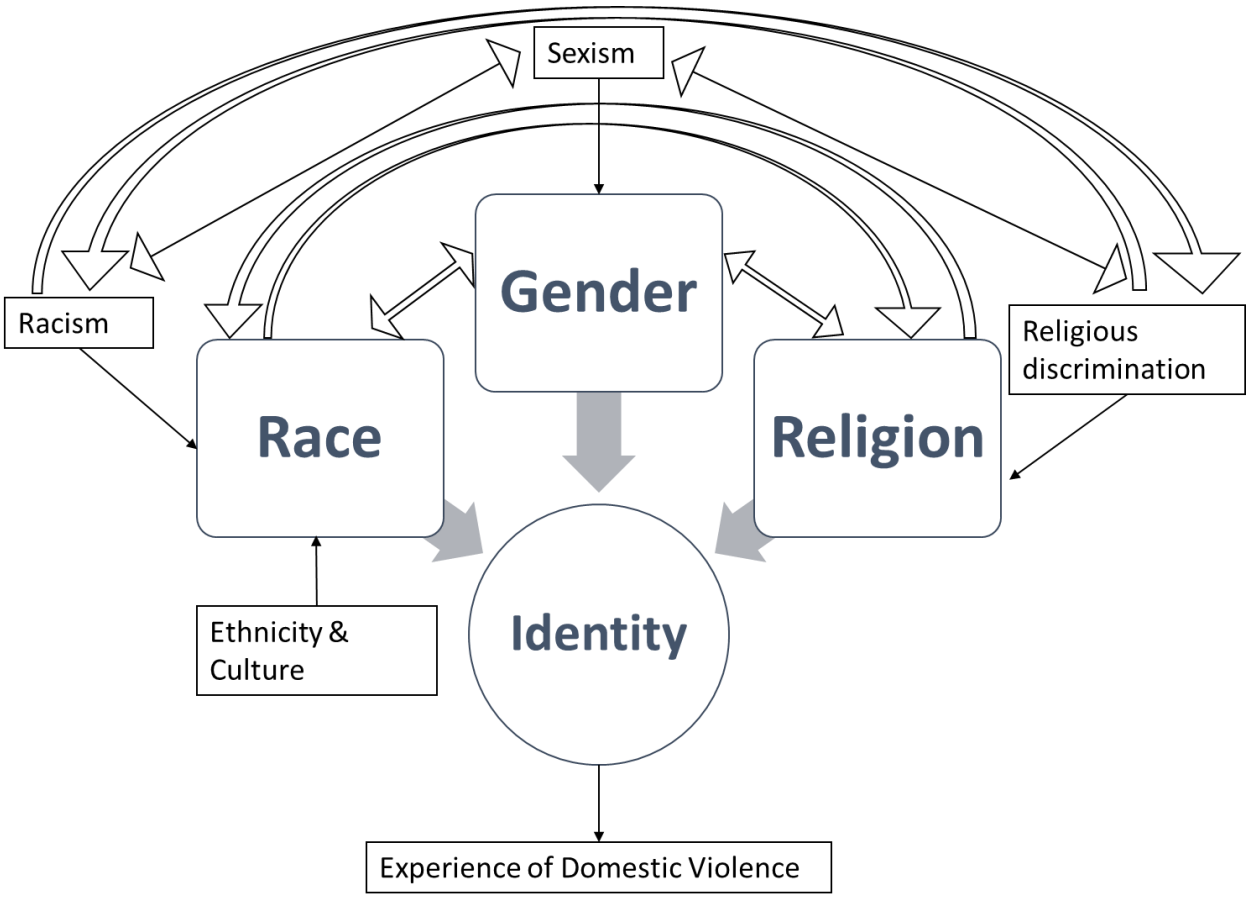

Figure 1. Schematic diagram of intersectionality based on the literature.

Different aspects of identity—race (black), gender (woman), and religion (Islam)—are experienced simultaneously. They shape one another and make up an overall identity. Discrimination—racism, sexism, Islamophobia—also influence experience. While I deductively examined systems of oppression in which the participants of this study do not have privilege, other aspects of identity emerged as central to participants' experiences. This is described further in later chapters.

This study is concerned with how the intersectionality of a person's identity influences their experience of domestic violence and their coping responses. In the next section, I define

coping, critically examine how it has been studied generally and in domestic violence specifically, and describe how I conceptualize coping in this study.

C. Coping

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (p. 141). The study of coping comes from psychology and is concerned with how people manage stressful events (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986; Lazarus, 1993; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lazarus and Folkman took a distinctly different approach to coping than previous researchers. Instead of studying coping as rooted in animal drive or as a characteristic, they initiated the study of coping as a process. Further, the researchers view coping as an active process and exclude behaviors that do not require effort to alleviate stress. Coping is not concerned with traits or qualities that help a person deal with adversity, but rather in the midst of adversity, the decisions a person makes and what influences their decision making when a situation has exceeded their capacity.

1. Three major aspects of coping

There are three main features to coping as a process (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). First, coping is *contextual* (Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and *transactional* (Lazarus, 1998); it is focused on the person-environment exchange (Folkman et al., 1986). Context here means the situation the person is dealing with (i.e. domestic violence) as well as the person's larger environment, which includes the resources they have. Lazarus & Folkman (1984) identify that such resources include "health and energy; existential beliefs, e.g., about God, or general beliefs about control; commitments, which have motivational properties that can help sustain coping; problem-solving skills; social skills; social support; and material resources"

(p. 179). Coping is influenced by the persons' evaluation of the encounter and what it takes to deal with it considering their resources (Folkman et al., 1986).

Second, coping is process oriented; it focuses on what the person thinks or does in the situation and how this reaction is affected by the way the situation unravels (Folkman et al., 1986). In this respect, the process of coping can change, behaviorally and cognitively, at different stages in the process of dealing with a stressful event (Lazarus, 1993; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, these changes in response are not random, but rather are mediated by a continued cognitive reappraisal of one's situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Lastly, coping as a process is concerned with what a person actually does or thinks in a situation, not with what a person should do (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). As Folkman et al (1986) distinguishes "we make no *a priori* assumptions about what constitutes good or bad coping" (p. 993). Judging coping as good or bad leads one to misconstrue the measure of its outcome, assuming that its outcome is based on how "good" of a coping process the person followed (Lazarus, 1993). The coping process should be measured separately from their outcomes to independently measure whether they are adaptive or maladaptive (Lazarus, 1993). While there are no universal "good" or "bad" coping processes, there is the possibility that some coping processes may work better than others, but this depends on the particular person and situation (Lazarus, 1993).

2. Detailed process of coping

At the center of the theory of coping are two processes that mediate stressful events and their outcomes. The first process is *cognitive appraisal* (Lazarus, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Folkman et al., 1986), and this can be seen as pre-coping. Cognitive appraisal is made up of *primary* and *secondary* appraisal. In primary appraisal "the person evaluates

whether… she has something at stake in the encounter" (Folkman et al., 1986, p.993) and if the situation is significant to [her] well-being (Lazarus, 1998). Primary appraisal is important because it determines the emotional reaction one will have to the stressful situation (Lazarus, 1998). As mentioned earlier, coping is a transactional process between the person and the environment. She has the ability to reappraise the situation and change her reaction based on the outcome of previous methods of coping or change in the person-environment relationship.

If she finds in the primary appraisal process that she does have something at stake, and the response is that she is in harm's way, she then undergoes secondary appraisal (Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus, 1998). In secondary appraisal, she discerns if she can do anything to prevent harm, overcome the situation, or change the situation. Secondary appraisal can be considered the essence of coping; this is the stage in which the person decides how to react, whether cognitively or behaviorally. This reaction can be conscious and deliberate or unconscious and automatic (Lazarus 1998). She evaluates her options and the primary and secondary appraisals come together to determine if the situation is significant for her well-being and if it is threatening or challenging (Folkman et al, 1986).

At the end of the process of coping, there is an *immediate outcome*. The immediate outcome is the extent to which the stressful situation was resolved successfully as assessed by the person experiencing the stress. The assessment of this is based on the individual's values, goals, and expectations concerning the situation (Folkman et al, 1986).

Coping is different from outcomes. As previously mentioned, coping is described by the efforts made to manage the stressor, including the person's cognitive and behavioral reactions, which are separate from the effectiveness, good or bad, of these reactions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lazarus (1993) emphasizes that the coping is independent of the outcome, and that the

role of the coping process and the outcome can be independently assessed. *Adaptiveness* then is the effectiveness of coping in improving that adaptational outcome, for example, reducing the violence a woman experiences. Success is determined by the person doing the coping and is an assessment of its effectiveness by the person. *Consolidated* is the extent to which a person has achieved a stable way of coping.

Coping is not concerned with "the best" methods of coping; coping examines how to manage stress not how to master stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Although one may cope by attempting to master their environment, all forms of dealing with the stressful situation—whether seemingly passive (such as denial) or aggressive (such as a violent, physical response)—may be considered coping.

3. Functions of coping

There are two major functions of coping: problem-focus and emotion-focus (Lazarus & Folkman, 1986; Lazarus, 1993). *Problem focused coping* involves changing or managing the problem causing the stress by either changing the environment or changing oneself. *Emotion-focused coping* is managing the emotional response to the stressor (Lazarus & Folkaman, 1984); this could either be the person changing the way they interact with the stressor (known as vigilance or avoidance) or changing the meaning of what is happening (Lazarus, 1993). While one focus of coping is not inherently better than the other, Lazarus argues that there is a "strong tendency in Western values to venerate the former and distrust the latter" (p. 238).

4. Visual representation of coping

Gears influence the movement of other gears. This is also true with coping. Coping is a process, and while one is dealing with particular encounters, she may go through multiple ways of coping. This is true of domestic violence in that people often experience more

than one incidence of violence in the relationship, and the intensity or severity of the abuse can change throughout the course of the relationship. As gears are influenced by the movement of other gears, domestic violence is an event influenced by other factors, including previous instances of violence. Figure 2 is visual representation of the coping process based on the literature, adapted to a domestic violence context. The experience is at the center of the gear and coping is the circular process or rotation of the gear, but just as each gear influences the other, so does each instance of violence influence the next process of coping. Figure 3 details the coping process based on the literature, also adapted to reflect domestic violence.

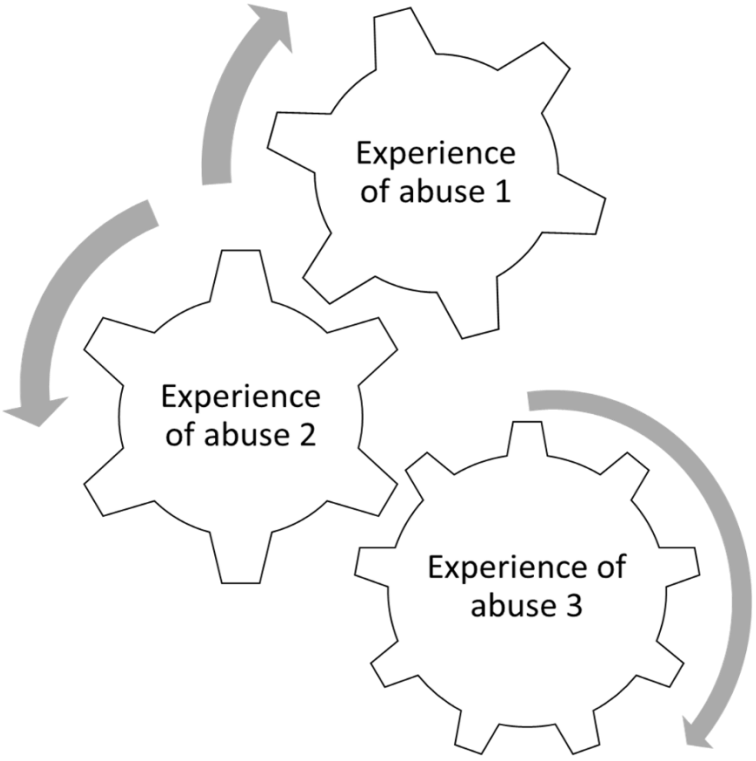

Figure 2. Schematic diagram of coping based on the literature.

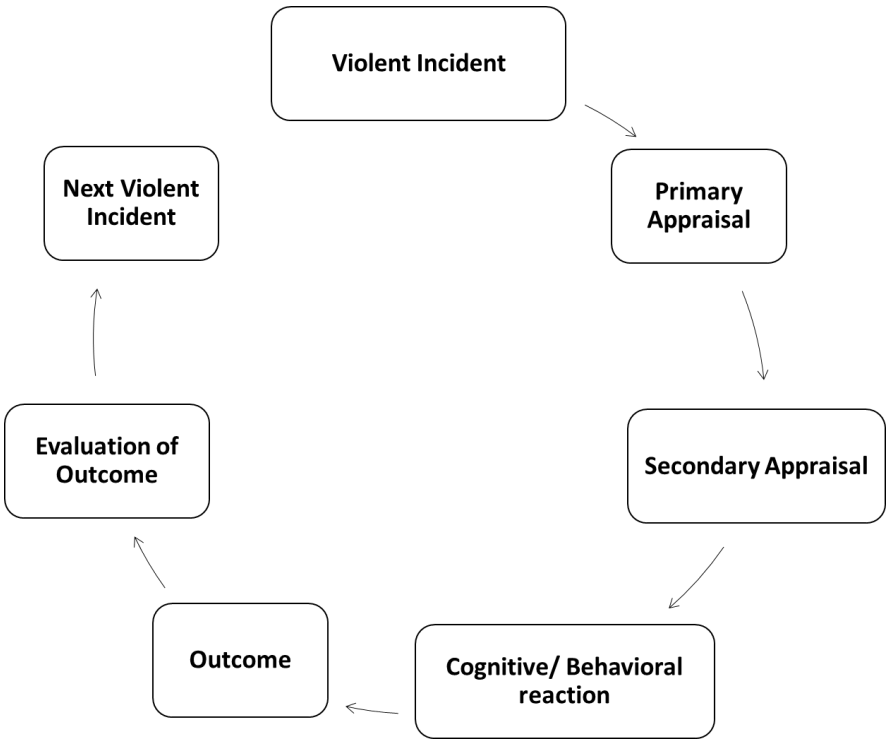

Figure 3. Schematic diagram of coping with a single incident of violence based on the literature.

Drawing upon coping theory, there is first an experience of domestic violence. One must then determine if the experience influences her well-being and if she has something at stake (primary appraisal). If the answer to this appraisal is "yes," she then enters secondary appraisal, in which she decides how to cope. Next is her actual coping strategy, and from this strategy, there is an outcome. She then evaluates the outcome for its effectiveness, and this plays a role if there is another incidence of violence that leads to another process of coping (another gear).

In following sections, I examine what is known about women's responses to domestic violence using the coping model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) as a framework. First, I will describe the conceptualization of domestic violence within the coping model. I will then examine what the literature says about how women have responded to domestic violence. I divide this section into (1) women's coping strategies (2) factors that influence coping strategies,

and (3) the outcome of coping strategies. Within each section, I pay special attention to studies that discuss the experience of black and Muslim women.

5. Coping model & domestic violence

Domestic violence coping has been conceptualized in different ways, and the variations are tied to the theories used to explain domestic violence. Early studies examined coping as strategies or skills (Finn, 1985; Mitchell & Hodson, 1983; Launius & Jensen, 1987; Claerhout et al., 1982), and reflected a deficit orientation of domestic violence. Such studies have concluded that women who experienced abuse were less likely to use active strategies, deeming responses such as staying home not only to be avoidant but also ineffective (Claerhout et al., 1982). Lanius and Jensen (1987) examined the problem solving skills of women who had experienced abuse using a comparison group of women who had not experienced abuse. Researchers concluded that women who had experienced domestic violence had three major deficits: the lack of ability to brainstorm multiple solutions, the lack of ability to brainstorm effective solutions, and the lack of ability to select an effective option.

One limitation of these early studies is the use of deficiency models, such as learned helplessness theory, to explain women's behaviors. In addition, scholars view coping as merely a skill instead of as a process influenced by multiple factors. Another major limitation of these studies is that they do not look at domestic violence as a specific context, rather they use general coping measures to describe coping with domestic violence. This conceptualization affects findings, and the conclusions reached imply that something is wrong with the woman experiencing domestic violence.

More recently, domestic violence scholars have examined coping as a contextual, cognitive-behavioral process (Lindhorst, Nurius, & Macy, 2005; Hamby & Gray-Little, 1997;

Goodman, Dutton, Weinfurt & Cook, 2003) that closely mirrors the general coping process model (Lazarus & Folkam, 1984). Hamby and Gray-Little (1997) introduced the competency model of domestic violence as an alternative to deficit models. In the competency model, women are active and rational in their decisions of how to deal with the abuse. Using the competency model as a framework in a study of domestic violence victim's coping strategies, Hamby and Gray-Little identified that the way women thought about the abuse influenced their responses; the more women disapproved of the abuse they experienced, the more likely they were to exhibit an active response to the violence. Further, they suggest that the relationship between violent stimuli and women's responses is curvilinear: assuming that severity of violence lies on a continuum, in the first two-thirds of the continuum, response increases as violence increases. However, for extreme violence there may be a downturn; "at some point the violence…will be sufficient to prevent the victim from responding" (p. 347).

Lindhorst, Nurius, and Macy (2005) offer a clear connection between the coping model and domestic violence by describing primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, and emotional responses. Primary appraisal involves the recognition of a stressor or threat. However, "threat" is different for different women. In addition, the same woman may interpret the same types of violence to have different levels of threat or harm depending on the context. For example, the victim may perceive that the threat is greater if a child is involved or if the abuse has occurred before. Threats can be difficult to recognize, especially in the early stages of the relationship as the abuse may take on subtle forms of control (Lindhorst et al., 2005). As a result, women may not recognize that they are in an abusive relationship unless others bring it to their attention. Secondary appraisal involves deciding how to address the violence (Lindhorst et al., 2005). In secondary appraisal, women consider what options they have, which are the best, what resources

they have available to them, and what the potential consequences could be to their actions. Secondary appraisal is also different from woman to woman and context to context. Lindhorst et al (2005) note that secondary appraisal depends on what the harm or threat represents to the woman experiencing violence and her view is influenced by "underlying beliefs, goals, and commitments…. Appraisals are windows into the woman's system of meaning, which…carry sociocultural history and context" (p. 4). Therefore, social location, culture, and personal history are important contextual factors to consider when examining a woman's domestic violence coping process.

a. Women's responses: Coping strategies

Coping strategies are women's responses to the abuse after undergoing secondary appraisal. The following section will examine how scholars have categorized and defined domestic violence coping strategies.

1) Behavioral v. Cognitive

Similar to the coping process model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), domestic violence coping can be cognitive and/or behavioral. Hamby and Gray-Little's competency model of domestic violence categorizes coping strategies as cognitive reactions or behavioral responses situated in the coping process. In the competency model, cognitive reactions are how women perceive the abuse; Hamby and Gray-Little categorize these perceptions as problem-minimizing reactions, problem-focusing reactions, or critical attitudes. Behavioral responses are categorized as active (i.e. talked with partner about ending relationship, left the violent situation, sought counseling, called the police, discussed ways of avoiding similar incidents) or passive (i.e. dismissing the partner, becoming silent, withdrawing from partner).

In the competency model of domestic violence, cognitive responses preceded behavioral ones. However, in the coping model, a behavioral response is not a required component and a cognitive response is a valid response as well (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). Further, cognition precedes both types of responses during the primary and secondary appraisal stages.

2) Problem-Focused v. Emotion-Focused

Scholars also categorize domestic violence by problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies (Clements & Sawhney, 2000; Goodman et al., 2003). Problem-focused coping are strategies women use to control the situation whereas emotion-focused coping are strategies used to regulate the distress arising from the violence. Either type can be cognitive or behavioral. An example of problem-focused strategies in the literature includes "stood my ground and fought for what I wanted" (Clements & Sawhney, 2000, p. 226). An example of emotion-focused reactions includes avoidance (i.e. going on as nothing happened, wishful thinking, self-blame). While problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping have distinctly different definitions, differentiating between the two categories is not always clear (Goodman et al., 2003). One has to understand the intention behind the response. Lazarus (1993) cautions researchers against assuming that problem-focused coping is better than emotion-focused coping. However, problem-focused domestic violence coping has been studied more than emotion-focused coping, likely because it is easier to conceptualize and is viewed more favorably as a method of coping with domestic violence.

Goodman et al (2003) used the coping process model to develop the Intimate Partner Violence Strategies Index (IPVSI) that measures the extent to which women employ problem-focused domestic violence coping strategies. Goodman et al (2003) categorize coping in the IPVSI as either public or private, with specific coping strategies falling underneath the

categorization. The private realm consists of strategies that do not require the assistance of a public institution. Private realm strategies are: placating (i.e. "tried to keep things quiet from him," "did whatever he wanted to stop the violence," "tried not to cry during the violence"), resistance (i.e. "fought back physically/verbally," "slept separately," "left home to get away from him"), and safety planning (i.e. "hid car or house keys," "developed a code so others would know I was in danger," "kept extra supply of basic necessities for myself/children"). The public realm consists of strategies that rely on external sources of support. Public realm strategies are: legal (i.e. "filed or tried to file criminal charges," "sought help from legal aid," "called police"), formal network (i.e. "tried to get help from clergy," "stayed in a shelter," "tried to get him counseling for violence"), and informal network (i.e. "talked to family or friends about what to do to protect myself/children," "stayed with family or friends," "made sure there were other people around").

Studies of black and Muslim survivors of domestic violence have found that they use various cognitive/behavioral and problem-focused/emotion-focused coping strategies (Mitchell et al., 2006; Morrison et al., 2006; Gillum, 2008; Hodges & Cabanilla, 2011, Akinsulure-Smith (2013); Goodman et al., 2003; 2005; Fowler, 2004; 2011; Potter, 2007; Ting, 2010). For example, Ting (2010) found that African immigrant women utilize multiple strategies ranging from being stoic, a cognitive emotion-focused strategy, to seeking legal assistance, a behavioral problem-focused strategy. Other coping strategies included formal and informal help seeking, the use of spirituality and religion, faith-based services, as well as resistance, placating, and safety planning.

3) Religion, spirituality, & coping

In a meta-ethnographic study, Yick (2008) found that spirituality was an important tool for dealing with domestic violence for several faith and racial groups. Studies have indicated that black women and Muslim women who have experienced violence use spirituality and religion to cope (see for example: Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001, Fowler et al., 2011, Potter, 2007, Nash, 2005, Akinsulure-Smith et al., 2013). While spirituality and religion have different definitions, in this section, I discuss them together as they are not always mutually exclusive constructs, and both describe an aspect of identity that is a focus of the present study.

Spiritual and religious coping have been examined three ways. First, researchers have conducted quantitative studies in which they have correlated women's level of spirituality and religiosity (Finn, 1985; Mitchell, Hargrove, Collins, Thompson, Reddick, & Kaslow, 2006; Watlington & Murphy, 2006) with a psychological or social outcome or in comparison to a sample of women who had not experienced abuse. There are conflicting findings on levels of spirituality and religion among women who have experienced domestic violence. In a 1985 study, Finn et al found that women who experienced abuse used spirituality less than those who had not. Mitchell et al (2006) reported similar findings in a study of low-income African American women, identifying that women who had experienced abuse had lower levels of spirituality than those who had not. However, a later study found that 97% of a racially diverse sample of women who had experience domestic violence identified spirituality as a source of strength (Gillum, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006). These differences could be due to variable ways of measuring religion and spirituality as well as differences in overall study design. The lack of study on spirituality and religion in the lives of abused women further contribute to the conflicting conclusions in the literature.

Secondly, religion and spirituality have been examined as domestic violence coping strategies that include using prayer and attending religious services to find hope and strength. Researchers have also examined how religious views and interpretation of religious text influence women's response to domestic violence as well as how women use religion and spirituality as a response to the abuse. In a qualitative study of Christian African American wives who experienced domestic violence, women reported that their faith provided them with a sense of agency during the relationship (Nash, 2005). Women also reported using "faith constructs and practices" such as prayer and religious interpretation both as means of managing the abuse and ways of identifying strategies to end the abuse. In a qualitative study exploring the use of religion and spirituality among an ethnically diverse group of Muslim women, women reported using religion to cope with domestic violence. Specifically, Muslim women reported coping by listening to Qur'anic recitation, praying, and meditating by repeatedly reciting Qur'anic verses or other Islamic phrases. Studies have reported similar religious coping strategies among African and Haitian immigrant women (Latta & Goodman, 2005; Ting, 2010).

Scholars have also studied how women use religious institutions and spiritual guidance as a means of "tangible" help seeking, such as counseling to facilitate leaving a relationship. Religion and help seeking are almost synonymous under this conceptualization. Potter (2007) found that African American women used religion and spirituality to assist them in leaving their violent relationship. One of the Muslim women in the study described that when she reported the abuse to the religious community, men of the community came to her home and escorted her husband away. Another woman reported being told on her wedding day that if there were any problems in the home to call other community members to intervene. When support in religious

institutions is not available, women have expressed the belief that religious institutions should assist domestic violence victims (Gillum 2008).

4) Conceptual diagram of coping strategies

Women who experience domestic violence use multiple coping strategies. While researchers have identified distinctly different types of coping strategies, these strategies are not mutually exclusive, and women often use multiple coping strategies simultaneously. Figure 4 is a schematic diagram of domestic violence coping strategies based on research literature.

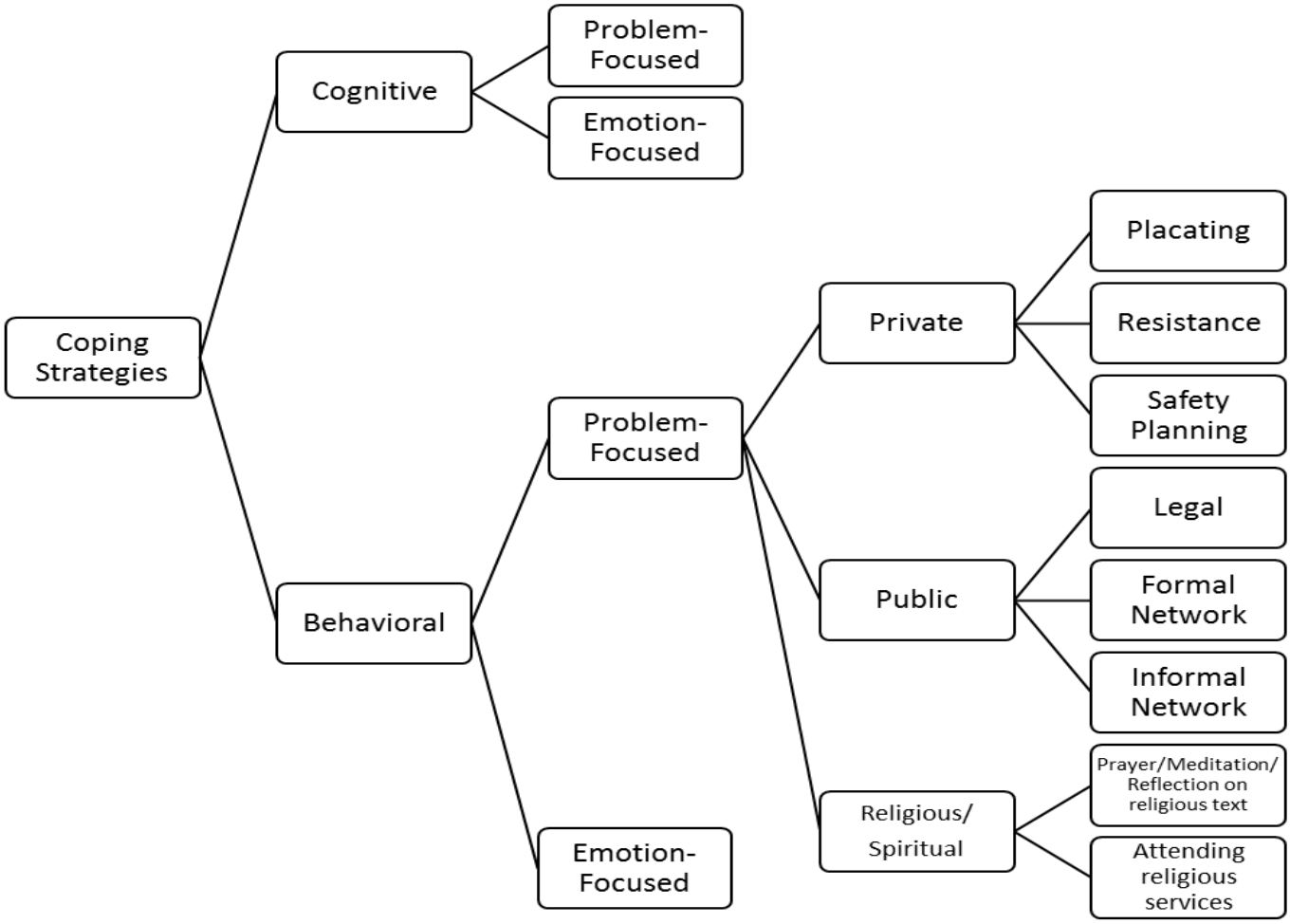

Figure 4. Schematic diagram of domestic violence coping strategies based on the literature.

b. Factors that influence coping

Researchers have examined the factors that influence appraisal, emotional and behavioral reactions, and outcomes. There are a variety of factors that influence how a woman copes with domestic violence. These include frequency of abuse (Hamby & Gray Little,1997; Lacey, Saunders, & Zheng, 2011; Mitchell & Hodson, 1983; Waldrop & Resick, 2004), severity of physical abuse (Ting & Panchanadeswran, 2009; Waldrop & Resick), available resources (Mitchell & Hodson, 1983; Waldrop & Resick, 2004), social support (Belknap, Melton, Denny, Fleury-Steiner, & Sullivan, 2009; Mitchell & Hodson, 1983; Waldrop & Resick, 2004), prior effectiveness of coping strategies (Gillum; 2008; Waldrop & Resick, 2004), risk (Zanville & Cattaneo, 2012), causal attributions (Meyer, Wagner, & Dutton, 2010), and love and loyalty (Kearney, 2001; Ting & Panchanadeswran, 2009).

1) Frequency and severity of abuse

Research findings suggest that the frequency and severity of domestic violence affects the types of coping strategies women use. In a study of 60 women in domestic violence shelters in the San Francisco area, Mitchell & Hodson (1983) found that as the frequency of violence increased, women tended to report receiving less social support, and were more likely to report using avoidant coping strategies such as "kept to myself" or "prepared for the worse." Further, "less active-cognitive coping, more avoidance coping, and greater frequency and severity of violence [were] all associated with more severe depression" as a psychological outcome (p.641). One limitation of this study was that it adopted a trait view, as rather than a process view, of coping. As aforementioned, such perspectives of coping have a deficit orientation towards women's coping strategies.

Later studies suggest that women actually use "active" coping strategies as the frequency and severity of the abuse increase. Hamby and Gray-Little (1997) examined women's cognitive and behavioral responses to domestic violence. They found that women who experienced more severe violence, specifically physical abuse, used more active behavioral coping strategies than women who experienced verbal abuse. Disapproving thoughts were a mediator between active responses and the abuse, suggesting that how women think about the abuse influences their coping strategies.

Similarly, African immigrant women who had experienced domestic violence reported that the severity of abuse influenced women's decision to leave the relationship, an active behavioral coping strategy. In a qualitative study examining the experience of African immigrant women, research found that women decided to leave when the abuse escalated to a risk of lethality (Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009).

2) <u>Available resources</u>

Resources influence coping strategies, particularly when leaving the abusive relationship. The literature presents mixed findings on the relationship between having/not having resources and leaving, often with other factors influencing the outcome of leaving. For example, Mitchell and Hodson (1983) found that women "with greater personal resources, more supportive responses from formal and informal sources of help, and less avoidant-coping styles [were] more likely to show psychological health" (p.647). However, this outcome may not be true for all women. Lacey, Saunders, and Zhang (2011) found that women of color of high socioeconomic status were more likely than their white counterparts to stay in the abusive relationship. Lacey et al hypothesize that this difference may be due to women of color not wanting to lose social status within their communities and social networks.

Studies of domestic violence within African immigrant and Arab Muslim communities suggest that a lack of economic resources is a barrier to leaving the relationship. For example, African immigrant women have described their inability to pay back the "bride price" that was given to them at the time of marriage (Ting & Panchanadeswaran; 2009). Women also reported believing that without money they could not seek formal help, a similar sentiment expressed by women in a study of Arab Muslim women (Abu-Ras, 2003).

Studies on education as a resource have shown conflicting findings. Although researchers have found that educational attainment is a factor that influences Arab American Muslim women to seek help for the abuse (Abdel Meguid, 2006), immigration can be a barrier to the benefit of this resource. Ting and Panchanadeswaran (2009) identify that an additional barrier to financial self-sufficiency for African immigrant women is the fact that some women were college educated back in their home countries but had difficulty transferring their degrees, making it difficult for them to secure stable employment and housing.

3) <u>Social support</u>

Social support is both a means of coping and a factor in how women cope. Studies suggest that as the frequency of violence increases, women receive less social support, and are more likely to report using avoidant coping strategies (Mitchell & Hodson, 1983). Belknap et al (2009) explored the role of informal and formal social support in the lives of domestic violence victims seeking criminal prosecution for the violence. All women in the study reported that someone knew about the abuse. Women rated religious leaders highly in their quality of social support, while the police, prosecutors, and other legal services were rated the lowest, indicating that the outcome of social support as a coping mechanism may be

related to who the support is sought from. It appears that informal social support has had a better outcome from the survivors' perspective than formal social support.

There were racial and educational differences in the results (Belknap et al., 2009). White women and highly educated women were more likely to report that a wider network of people, including coworkers, counselors, shelter workers, and legal advisors, knew about the abuse. Women of color were more likely to have told a protection order advocate of the abuse.

4) Prior effectiveness of coping strategies

Survivors employ multiple strategies to escape the abuse. The strategies used in subsequent instances of violence depend on the effectiveness of the previous strategies. Gillum (2008) examined black women's experiences in seeking help for domestic violence. Women expressed dissatisfaction when receiving formal services, such as entering the shelter or calling the police. Women who coped by seeking help from the legal system expressed dissatisfaction citing that the police were unresponsive or the abuser did not receive any legal penalty (Gillum, 2008). This led women to distrust police and prevented them from calling in future instances of violence for fear of it backfiring.

In a qualitative study of the domestic violence experiences of African immigrants, Akinsulere-Smith et al (2013) identified a three-step help-seeking pathway. First, women sought help from their families. If the first strategy was not helpful, women then sought help from community elders or religious leaders. Lastly, women sought help through formal social services, such as going to a shelter, calling the police, or seeking protective orders. The response women received in one step of the pathway influenced whether they sought further assistance and who they went to for help.

5) Risk

Related to factors that influence coping is the concept of risk; in the appraisal stage of the coping model, the person assesses risk in determining what coping strategy she will utilize. Zanville and Catteneo (2012) examined the relationship between risk and coping using a risk-based coping model of domestic violence developed by Hamby and Gray-Little (2007). Results showed that women could be categorized into three different risk groups, and that the greater their perceived risk, the more coping strategies women used. Lindhurst et al (2005) expanded the concept of risk by identifying that risk is not the same for all women, and that "their social location, their access to financial resources, the policy environment in which they live and the level of development of supportive institutions in their community" (p.5) influence women's risks and how they cope.

6) Causal attributions

Causal attributions are reasons women give for the abuse the perpetrator committed. Meyer, Wagner, and Dutton (2010) examined the causal attributions women make for the abuse they experience and how this affects their coping strategies. The specific attributions explored were partner blame, excuses for violence, and a combination of the two (Meyer et al., 2010). Researchers tested causal attributions on six different types of coping strategies: "placating, resistance, safety planning, legal resources, formal help sources, and informal help sources" (p. 904). They found that women who exhibited partner blame utilized a wider variety of coping strategies than women who made excuses for the violence. Causal attributions are important because causal attributions made for previous experiences of violence influence the next set of causal attributions, and these, in turn, influence the action a woman takes.

7) Love & loyalty

Although understudied, love and loyalty to the relationship appears to influence the utilization of leaving and seeking help as coping strategies. In an analysis of qualitative studies that included ethnically diverse samples of women who had experienced domestic violence, Kearney (2001) found that women discounted early domestic abuse out of commitment to the romantic relationship. Nash (2005) identified that African American women's religion influenced their loyalty. For example, in considering the violence they experienced by their husbands, women reported caring for their husbands as part of their religious duty. Research suggests that the cultural importance placed on marriage and the desire to keep the marriage intact influences African immigrant women's use of help-seeking (Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009). Akinsulure-Smith (2013) found that African immigrant women expressed shame of being a victim and having a failed marriage. Family members also enforced loyalty by pressuring women to reconcile with their partner and to drop legal charges. Additionally, participants expressed that their loyalty to the community meant that they had to preserve the ideal image of African immigrants and African males to the outside world that already stigmatizes them.

8) Other factors

Studies have contextualized coping to specific groups, revealing additional factors that influence coping. In studies of black and Muslim women, additional factors that influence coping include immigration status, religious interpretation of domestic violence (Abu-Ras, 2003), fear of stigma both within and outside the community (Abdel Meguid, 2006; Abu-Ras, 2007; Abu-Ras, 2003; Muftic & Bouffard, 2008), and perceptions of social

services (Faizi, 2001; Gillum, 2008; Abu-Ras, 2003). Racism and gender roles also influenced domestic violence coping strategies (Nash, 2005; Gillum, 2008).

Nash (2005) found that African American women attributed their abuse to racism. Women did not excuse the abuse, but associated the abuse with the racism their partners experienced. They also associated the abuse with economic disparity in the home; women who were more educated or economically empowered found that this caused tension in their marriage. Women found religious engagement as essential to coping and were resistant to formal institutions of care such as counseling and medical treatment due to negative perceptions of what the experience would be like.

For African immigrant women and Arab Muslim women, immigration is an additional factor in how they cope. Limited language skills and limited knowledge of the rights afforded to victims of domestic violence limit the options for coping strategies (Abu-Ras, 2003; Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009).

In a study of Arab Muslim women, religion was cited as a barrier to seeking help for domestic violence; 43.3% of participants stated that religion was a barrier and that "their religion discouraged them from seeking outside help" (Abu-Ras, 2003, p. 43). However, other studies suggest that religion is a source of strength for Muslim women and aided in ending the abuse (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2003; Potter, 2007).

Children also influence women's coping strategies. African immigrant women reported that they decided to leave the relationship when they realized that their children's safety was at risk or when they realized the children were becoming aware of the abuse. Muslim African immigrant women in polygamous marriages experienced an additional layer of negotiating to stay or leave; women reported staying in the abusive relationships and utilizing other coping

strategies because they did not want to leave their children with another wife or have their children lose their place in the family (Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009).

While several factors that influence coping are varied, a limitation to the study of domestic violence coping strategies is this variation. Some factors are directly related to the abuse, i.e. frequency and severity, while others focus on the context for the abuse. "Factors" are not uniformly defined in the literature.

c. Outcomes of coping

Researchers have examined the psychological outcomes of domestic violence coping strategies. In their literature review of domestic violence coping, Waldrop and Resick (2004) identified that depression, PTSD, and self-esteem are the most frequently studied psychological outcome constructs explored in the coping literature. Because studies conceptualize "coping strategies" differently, the results of studies on coping and psychological outcomes vary.

Some studies have reported that problem-focused coping strategies may have a more positive psychological outcome than emotion-focused strategies, concluding that problem-focused are more adaptive forms of domestic violence coping (Clements & Sawhney, 2000). Reviere et al (2007) conducted a mixed-methods study examining how psychological factors influence the link between domestic violence and suicide among low-income African American women, and compared those who committed suicide and those who did not. Their results showed that women who did not attempt suicide used more indicators of "efficacious" coping such as seeking social support and used less maladaptive strategies such as drugs and alcohol compared to those who had attempted suicide. They also found that women who had attempted suicide used strategies aimed at placating the abuser whereas women who did not attempt suicide

used coping strategies aimed at ensuring safety or leaving the relationship (Reviere et al., 2007). Meadows, Kaslow, Thompson, and Jurkovic (2005) examined coping as a protective factor against suicide attempts for African American women. They found that women who endorsed high levels of coping along with "hope, spiritual well-being… self-efficacy, social support from family members, social support from friends, [and] effectiveness in obtaining resources" were less likely to attempt suicide (p. 117).

More recently, researchers have examined the link between spirituality and coping outcomes. Watlington and Murphy (2006) examined the relationship between coping, religion and spirituality, social support, and mental health outcomes for African American survivors of domestic violence. Researchers found that those who scored higher on spirituality and religious involvement reported less symptoms of depression than their counterparts, and religious involvement was negatively associated with PTSD. However, researchers identified that the direction of the relationship is unclear; whether religion and spirituality affected mental health or if mental health affects their religious involvement could not be determined.

Gillum et al. (2006) found that domestic violence victims who were involved in a religious institution and viewed spirituality as a source of comfort and support had less depression and a higher quality of life. The study showed that for women of color, religious involvement was related to increased social support, a factor related to better psychological well-being (Gillum et al., 2006). Fowler et al (2011) found in their qualitative study of a diverse group that women who reported high levels of spirituality were more likely to use faith services over shelters. However, those with higher instances of abuse were more likely to report dissatisfaction with faith-based services.

a. Gaps in the literature

The literature on domestic violence coping reveals several important connections between how women respond to domestic violence and factors that influence their response and outcomes. Women cope with domestic violence in a multitude of ways including placating, seeking legal assistance, changing how one thinks about the abuse, and leaving the relationship. Key factors such as risk, severity of the abuse, resources, and social support influence a woman's coping strategies. Researchers have begun to link coping strategies to different psychological and social outcomes. Study findings suggest that a contextualized view of women's responses to domestic violence using the coping model provides a broader understanding of domestic violence and women's decision-making processes.

There are gaps in the literature. First, studies have utilized various conceptualizations and measures of coping making it difficult to come up with a generalized conclusion about coping strategies. Further, even when studies use the same terms, researchers often come up with different conclusions based on how they measure coping and the theoretical framework guiding their study.

Second, domestic violence responses are overwhelmingly conceptualized as help seeking or social service seeking or leaving the relationship, leaving out the variety of different ways women respond before they even seek help. For example, we know little about the role of spirituality and religion on domestic violence coping, and the current literature in this area presents conflicting results.

Arguably, the measures used to collect data do not actually capture domestic violence coping experience. Many early and recent quantitative studies of domestic violence coping utilize measures that are not made for the context of domestic violence. Researchers use scales

for general coping or measure coping as a trait or skill. This is highly problematic as the basis of coping is that it is contextual, and Waldrop & Resick (2004) argue that domestic violence is a specific context. How women deal with domestic violence may not be how they deal with other stressors. Further, Waldrop and Resick point out that a history of trauma can influence how one deals with future trauma. Goodman et al (2011) indicate that women who are dealing with domestic violence and poverty cope in ways that may seem "maladaptive" but rather are strategies to manage survival.

Fourth, although researchers argue for a contextualized view of domestic violence coping, "context" is limited and often surrounds the violence itself, ignoring larger environmental influences. Specifically, few studies examine the influence of social location and the intersection of social identity as a context. In their conceptual article about coping, Goodman, Smyth, Borges, and Singer (2009) examined the intersection of domestic violence and poverty, identifying that women who experience violence and poverty experience additional barriers that affect their mental health. Goodman et al (2009) argue that the problem-focused versus emotion-focused model of domestic violence coping is not sufficient in explaining the coping strategies of women who experience both domestic violence and poverty as these women use a variety of coping strategies to navigate the multiplicity of crises they may face. Researchers introduce "survival focused coping" focused primarily on short-term survival such as meeting one's basic needs and keeping oneself and family safe (Goodman et al., 2009). There is a constant negotiation of risk, and the survivor takes small steps to stay safe and avoid greater risk. There is limited research on this form of coping, however.

Lastly, while studies have started to include historically overlooked populations in research, further research is needed that explores the diversity among women and the intersection

of social identity. Notably, few studies of domestic violence include black Muslim women in their sample. There are few, if any, studies that examine the intersection of the various aspects of black Muslim women's identity, or that examine how black Muslim women's identity influence how they cope with domestic violence.

D. Theoretical Framework: Domestic Violence, Coping, and Intersectionality

While the literature asserts that intersectionality affects one's experience of domestic violence, how it does so, and specifically how it influences domestic violence coping is in need of further exploration. The following study addresses both "hows" by examining the experiences of black Muslim women.

Two theoretical constructs guide this study: intersectionality and coping. I use intersectionality to examine black Muslim women's identity. I use coping to examine black Muslim women's response to domestic violence, which includes explaining how black Muslim women managed domestic violence, made decisions, what influenced their decisions, and the outcomes of their response. The focus of the study is how the intersectionality of a black Muslim woman's identity influences her decision-making in the context of domestic violence.

I recognize that to talk of "coping" with domestic violence may imply some sort of acceptance or lack of awareness of one's situation. Rather than studying coping as trait or skill as early scholars have done, I adopt Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) conceptualization of coping: coping as a process. As aforementioned, coping is a process that involves effort and change. The theory of coping implies that in order to cope with an experience, in this case, domestic violence, one must recognize that there is something to be "coped" with. This study recruited black Muslim women who acknowledged having experienced some form domestic violence.

The study of coping as a process is important because it provides the survivors' perspective of an adaptive outcome, allowing participants to define what worked best for them.

Additionally, I examine black Muslim women's experiences from an intersectional lens that is critical of structural factors such as racism and sexism. Coping is inherently contextual, but as described in the literature review, what is considered context varies; not every study assumes the structural environment as context. This study has the potential to contribute to addressing individual needs, as well as communal and societal structure, including social service delivery and how social workers and other professionals view women's decision-making when dealing with domestic violence.

As coping theory states, outcomes can be analyzed outside of the coping process. Although Lazarus (1993) would say that the researcher can determine whether or not the outcome was adaptive, I am interested in the woman's point of view. Did she find her overall process successful; did this work for her? In addition, how does she see her process and outcome as influenced by the intersection of her social identity? Although participants may not have thought about the role identity has played, I intentionally asked questions that make this explicit. For example, I asked participants to reflect on how their identity influenced their process of coping by reflecting on individual instances of violence. I also asked how each incident influenced their next means of coping, and overall, the role identity played in their experience of violence and how they decided to cope. This involved an interest in each woman's thoughts about situations, directly asking what she thought about during her decision making process. It also involved me exploring how she assessed each situation, asking questions such as what other options did she consider in addition to what her actual reaction was.

Figure 4 is a schematic diagram of the theoretical framework that guided the study. The top half of the diagram represents intersectionality, and the second half represents coping, both presented earlier in this chapter. What is new—and where my research question is situated—is the middle arrow that connects these two constructs.

1. Research question

The overarching research question that guided this study is: *How does a black Muslim women's identity influence how she responds to domestic violence?* This question was answered through exploring the following sub-questions: *1) How does she experience domestic violence? 2) How does she cope with it?*

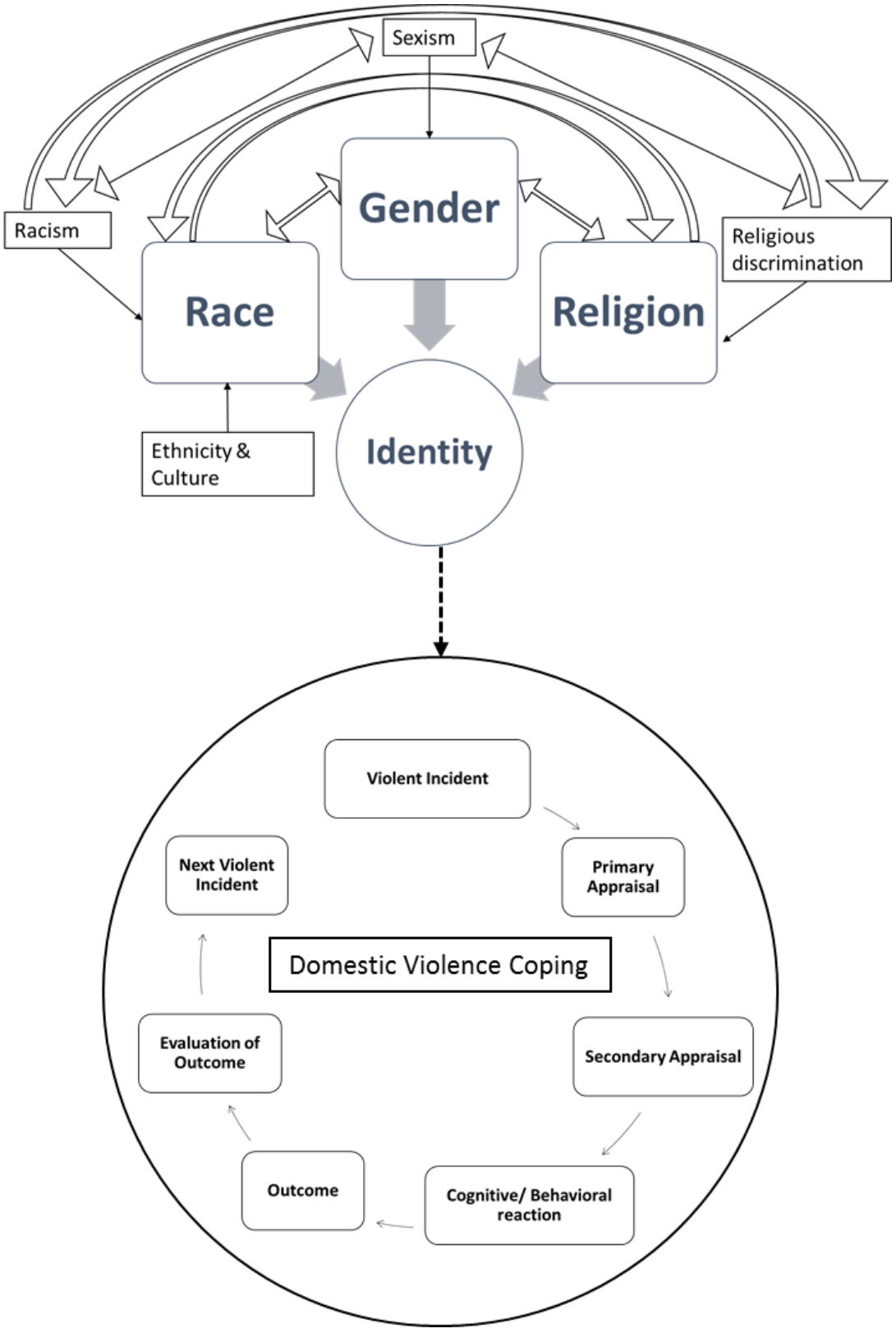

Figure 5. Theoretical Framework.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Paradigm

The critical theory paradigm informed this study. Guba and Lincoln (2005) describe critical theory as assuming "historical realism" ontology, meaning "a virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values… [that are] crystallized over time" (p. 195). The intracategorical approach to intersectionality aligns with this description. Social identity categories are socially constructed, so their validity as ontological entities can be challenged. However, people's social lives are shaped by such categorizations, and therefore they are real. The critical theory paradigm epistemology is transactional and subjectivist, meaning that the researcher and participants are "linked, with the values of the investigator…inevitably influencing the inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.110). Both the researcher and the participant shape research outcomes, a shift from the assumption that research is value-free. Intersectionality also has its own epistemological assumptions (Hancock, 2007):

1) More than one category of difference affects political problems and processes
2) The relationship between the categories is an open empirical question
3) "Categories of difference are conceptualized as dynamic productions of individual and institutional factors" (p. 251)
4) Each category has within-group diversity
5) Intersectional research examines categories at multiple levels of analysis
6) Attention must be paid to both empirical and theoretical aspects of the research question

Jordan-Zachery (2007) contributed additional tenets to intersectionality research, asserting that it must be contextual, it must challenge existing power structures, and it must liberate.

Cognitive behavioral theory informs coping and has its own epistemological assumptions. One, cognition affects behavior and emotions, and change in cognitive activity can affect change in behavior and emotions (Dobson & Block, 1988; Dobson & Dozois, 2001, 2010; Nurius & Macy, 2008). Reciprocally, emotions and behaviors influence thoughts and thought processes (Nurius & Macy, 2008). Second, humans have the ability to monitor and change their cognitive activity (Dobson & Block, 1988; Dobson & Dozois, 2001, 2010; Nurius & Macy, 2008). Third, there is reciprocity between the person and their environment (Nurius & Macy, 2008). People act based on what they perceive things to mean, and the meanings we make are shaped by the environment and personal experience (Berlin, 2010).

Methodologically, critical theory relies on dialogue between the researcher and participants, with the aim of inquiry being critical, transformative, and emancipatory (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2005). Critical theory speaks both to the study of domestic violence and the intersectional framework; it serves as an "action stimulus" for addressing social issues and reveals hidden structural and historical influences on human experience.

B. Advantage of Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methods are advantageous for several reasons. One, qualitative research provides detailed insight into lived experience and captures behavior, beliefs, views and norms of participants (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011; Oktay, 2012). In addition, researchers use qualitative methods to examine social interactions and complex social issues, both of which are important to understanding domestic violence.

Qualitative methodology allowed me to examine complex processes; in this study, qualitative methods provided me with the tools for investigating the coping process. Given the importance of intersectionality in my study, the ability to explore black Muslim women's

meaning-making and their social, cultural, economic, and physical contexts make qualitative methodology especially advantageous. Lastly, qualitative research is justice-oriented and lifts the voices of participants, thereby giving it the ability to liberate, a key component of intersectionality research.

C. Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a systematic approach to qualitative research aimed at developing theory. The goal of the following study is to develop theory, making grounded theory the ideal qualitative methodology (Oktay, 2012). Grounded theory is based on symbolic interactionism, and "was designed to study interactions between individuals and their social environments" (p.34). This is also a key component of my study. Both coping and intersectionality recognize the importance of context and human interaction with their environment. The research problem, domestic violence, is linked not only to interpersonal interaction, but also communal and societal engagement. The aim is to understand how they are all linked through theory development.

I used grounded theory as a method of inquiry for the study. There are general principles as to how to conduct it; however, the method is flexible and adaptable (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory is an inductive approach, but the researcher also employs deductive strategies in data analysis (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). Further, grounded theory is interpretive, with results subject to the researchers' lens and worldview (Charmaz, 2006; Hennink et al., 2011). Grounded theory is a circular process with data collection and data analysis occurring at the same time (Hennink et al., 2011). Key characteristics of grounded theory are theoretical sensitivity, constant comparison, theoretical sampling, and theoretical saturation (Oktay, 2012).

D. Positionality/Theoretical Sensitivity

A key component of qualitative research is positioning one's self in relation to the study.

Therefore, it is necessary for me to disclose my professional and personal motivations for why and how I have chosen to conduct this research.

As a social worker, I have worked both in a shelter with survivors of domestic violence and in a battering intervention and prevention program with perpetrators of abuse. I have always been curious to know why there were differences in outcomes of these interventions, but also in how people have dealt with their experiences of abuse. I have also been curious about how clients found hope, what their desired outcome was, and ways in which they strove to mitigate their situation. I saw how people were treated differently within agency settings and in the criminal justice system. I saw women cope in "socially acceptable" (at least in the domestic violence field) ways, such as leaving their abuser and finding sustenance on their own. Sometimes others coped in ways that are not viewed as positive, such as by using drugs. Thus, at this stage of my research career, I am not interested in making assumptions about how one should deal with their abuse. Rather, I seek to know the variety of ways in which people cope, their motivations for doing so, how they view the outcome of their coping process, and how the intersectionality of their identity influences how they cope.

Intersectionality resonates with me because of how well it describes my own experience. I am a middle-class heterosexual able-bodied black Nigerian American Muslim woman who was born and raised in the United States. When I speak of "my" community in everyday life, I may be referring to any of the following: American Muslim community, the Nigerian community, the African community, the Black community, or the Nigerian Muslim community. I may also be referring to my neighborhood, the city I grew up in, or the city where I currently live. I am actively involved in the American Muslim community; while my primary affiliation has been with predominately Nigerian mosques, I feel very connected to Muslims of all ethnic and

cultural backgrounds. As a young person who grew up in Houston, my religious education came both from the Nigerian community, as well as a diverse Sunday school in which my classmates were of various ethnic backgrounds. I have experienced privilege and discrimination because of my identity. I am proud of who I am and all that I represent. To understand me, one must understand all of me – I am not easily categorized, and each part of my identity shapes the others, forming my overall identity.

Intersectionality, therefore best speaks to my research of black Muslim women. I believe that an intersectional lens can illuminate how aspects of identity converge, clash, and intertwine. I especially believe that because of the misconception that "the West" is antithetical to "Muslim," I can help others understand those who live in the West as Muslims, showing that the two do not have to be in conflict. Further, an intersectional lens has the potential to show the nuances within the community and how identity, and therefore experience, is not homogenous even within the same religious, ethnic, and racial group.

In addition to my identity influencing my choice of theoretical framework, my community membership and involvement also influenced how I approached recruitment. For example, I did not want to place a woman at risk of further abuse or have women I interacted with be perceived as having experienced domestic violence. As a result, I limited the knowledge of my study by recruiting in women-only settings and distributing information cards as opposed to displaying recruitment flyers. I was also cautious of not directly asking women who I knew had experienced domestic violence to participate in the study. This was for two reasons. First, I did not state I would do so in my IRB application. Second, I was concerned that, given my community membership, my doing so would be coercive. All participants enrolled in the study based on the recruitment methods I describe in the following section.

E. Sampling

Qualitative studies typically use small sample sizes as the aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of people in a specific context (Oktay, 2012; Hennink et al., 2011). Also, the sampling frame and size is not predetermined, rather theoretical sampling continues until saturation, the point at which "additional analysis no longer contributes to anything new about a concept" (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007, p. 1137), is reached. As a result, Hennink et al (2011) suggest identifying a sample range as opposed to a specific number. For the following study, the estimated range was 10-12 participants. I projected that saturation would be reached quickly because the study population is bound by race, religion, and gender.

I utilized purposive sampling for recruitment. I live in Chicago, and all participants were recruited from Chicago due to feasibility. This was also advantageous because Chicago has a large and diverse black Muslim population. Inclusion criteria were: (1) self-identifying as having experienced domestic violence in an intimate partner relationship as an adult (over 18); (2) self-identifying as a woman; (3) belonging to a racially black ethnic group or self-identifying as black (4) self-identifying as Muslim; (5) self-identifying as Muslim at the time of the abusive relationship; (6) ability and willingness to remember, reflect, and discuss past abuse; (7) English speaking; (8) self-identifying as a survivor of abuse.

In domestic violence studies, criteria for the last incident of abuse range between as little as 4 months to no time limit at all. As a result, I did not place a cap on how long ago the last incident of abuse occurred. Further, I asked participants to reflect on significant incidences of violence as well as their overall experience. I was concerned with depth of reflection, which I do not believe is solely bounded by time.

However, participants in this study had to have self- identified as being a survivor of abuse. In a previous qualitative study of domestic violence, Morrison et al (2006) further clarified "survivor" to mean a woman who was once in an abusive relationship but is no longer involved in that or another abusive relationship at the time of the study. I adopted this same criterion. For the purpose of this study, "survivor" was defined as a woman who perceives she is no longer at risk for abuse. Because participating in this study presented potential risk to their safety, I screened out participants who identified as currently experiencing abuse or who identified as currently involved in an abusive relationship. For those who were ineligible based on these criteria, I provided them with referrals to domestic violence agencies in Chicago.

"Black" was defined as anyone belonging a racially black ethnic group or self-identifying as black. This includes Africans, African Americans, Carribbeans, Latinas, and others who do not necessarily identify with these categories but also are descendants of the African continent and self-identify as black.

I intentionally adopted an open definition of "intimate partner relationship". I recognize that intimate partner relationship can mean a variety of scenarios – a married couple, a dating or courting relationship, a cohabitating relationship, amongst others.

1. Recruitment strategy

I employed several different strategies to recruit the study's sample.

a. Gatekeepers

Gatekeepers can provide information about the community, may assist in recruitment, and can advocate for the research study (Hennink et al., 2011). Before distributing information cards or making announcements at events, I informed gatekeepers about my study and sought their permission to advertise it in their spaces. This included seeking permission

from community leaders and mosque leadership to give brief presentations to women at the mosque after Friday prayers, during Ramadan dinners, and at women's meetings.

Several community-based social service agencies have connections with the Muslim community, and I serve on the board of one of such organization. I sought permission from these agencies to distribute cards to their clientele.

b. Informal Networks

I also recruited from two informal groups in Chicago created by Muslim women to share knowledge and build friendships; I was also a member of these groups. I gave a brief presentation at meetings and distributed study information cards.

In addition to speaking at women's learning and friendship groups, I spoke to community members informally about the research I was conducting. This generated "leads" regarding possible sites for recruitment and gatekeepers who were knowledgeable about domestic violence in the Muslim community.

c. Snowball sampling

Snowball sampling is particularly useful in reaching participants with very specific characteristics that may be hard to find (Hennink et al. 2011). I asked study participants if they knew others who met the study criteria, and provided them with information cards to distribute. This strategy was also useful in identifying new recruitment sites; participants informed me of mosques that I was unfamiliar with and would have otherwise not considered seeking participants.

The initial recruitment goal was 10-12 participants. Ultimately, after recruiting for one calendar year, one participant was recruited through snowball sampling, two were recruited

through informal networks, and three were recruited through formal networks that I accessed through gatekeepers.

F. Data Collection Plan

I collected data in the form of two in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. I have included the study's interview guides in the appendices. In the initial interview, I asked about participants' experiences and responses to domestic violence. I also conducted follow-up interviews with participants approximately [two weeks- 1 month] after the initial interview. Charmaz (2006) notes that later interviews can help the researcher "address conceptual issues… [and] gather further data to develop properties of categories". In the follow-up interview, I asked the participants to expand on key points raised in the initial interview, allowing for more depth of analysis.

Hennink et al (2011) recommends in-depth interviews when the researcher is interested in capturing personal experiences. In my interviews, I explored how participants made decisions, their beliefs, their motivations, the meaning they attached to their experience, information about sensitive topics, as well as the context surrounding their lives (Hennink et al., 2011). These themes were of interest in the study, making interviews an ideal form of data collection.

I conducted interviews in locations that participants identified as being safe and comfortable for them. This included restaurants, participants' homes, and my car. I conducted all interviews in English, and I recorded all interviews with the consent of participants. I provided graduated reimbursements to participants for completing interviews; $15 for the first interview, $20 for the second interview, and $25 for completing a member check (up to $60 in total). Interviews were transcribed, and I removed personal identifiers from the data. In transcribing, I not only captured what participants said but also expressions such as laughter and

interviewees' utterances to provide a clearer context for the conversation. I also engaged in memo-writing throughout the interview and analysis process.

G. Sample

Six women enrolled in the study. All participants completed an initial interview, and 5 completed a follow-up interview. Interviews ranged from 23 minutes to 1 hour 55 minutes. I conducted member check interviews after establishing my core findings. Three participants completed individual member check interviews. I shared my findings with each participants and each expressed agreement with my themes and conclusions. Thus, I made no changes to my analyses or conclusions after completing the member check interviews.

As was required by my inclusion criteria, all participants identified as a belonging to a black ethnic group. Four of the women identified as African American, while two identified as West African. All six women reported having been married at least once; one reported being currently married and one reported being in a new relationship. All participants reported experiencing at least one type of abuse including physical, emotional/psychological, sexual, or financial abuse; three women reported experiencing physical abuse in more than one relationship. Two women are/were in polygamous marriages. Five of the six women have children. Lastly, three reported that they had reverted[2] to Islam later in life. Table 1 provides a description of the sample.

[2] In the Muslim community, it is common to refer to those who convert to Islam as "reverts" as opposed to "converts". This stems from the belief that everyone is born Muslim, and that it is through socialization that people choose another path. Thus, "converting" to Islam is, in actuality, "reverting" back to one's original state.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Pseudonym	Ethnicity[3]	Children (Yes/No)	Revert (Yes/No)	Number of Physically Abusive Relationships	Interviews completed
Asiyah	West African	No	No	1	2 & member check
Jamilah	African American	Yes	Yes	1	1
Latifah	West African	Yes	No	1	2
Naila	African American	Yes	Yes	>1	2 & member check
Rashida	African American	Yes	No	1	2 & member check
Rawhiya	African American	Yes	Yes	>1	2

H. Human Subjects Protections

After thorough review and approval of my study proposal by my dissertation committee, the University of Illinois at Chicago Institutional Review Board conducted an extensive review to ensure the protection of human subjects. While all measures were taken to ensure safety and confidentiality, there were potential risks to participants. One, the study could have elicited emotions as domestic violence and history of abuse is a highly sensitive topic. Another potential risk was risk to participants' safety, especially if potential participants were currently in a violent relationship or are being stalked by an abuser after leaving the relationship. There were the risks of the participant's former partner learning about their participation in the study and possible retaliation for disclosure. Because the study population is relatively specific and the community is fairly close knit, it was not possible for me to assure anonymity. Also because I am a part of

[3] Chicago's Muslim community is ethnically diverse. While there are several mosques in the city, many mosques are predominantly comprised of specific ethnic groups and nationalities. For this reason—and due to the small sample size—I do not disclose the West African participants' countries of origin, reducing the likelihood of their being identified by fellow community members.

the community, there was a risk that potential participants could have felt pressured or feel reluctant to express some ideas. Lastly, because I worked with community agencies to aid in recruitment, there is the risk that participants may feel pressured to participate in the study to receive services.

I employed several measures to mitigate these risks. I discussed potential risks during eligibility screening. I also informed participants that they were under no obligation to participate in the study and could withdraw without consequence. I included information about potential risks in the consent form. Right before the interview, I verbally informed participants of the sensitive nature of the study and let them know that if any time they would like to pause or end their participation they were able to do so. I also provided a list of domestic violence, mental health, and general community services to all participants at the end of the first interview.

Once interviews were transcribed, I removed all personal identifiers from the transcripts. I also deleted all audio versions of the interviews from the recorder. I kept non-anonymized transcripts in a separate locked filing cabinet in case I needed to refer back to specific participants for member checks. However, I will destroy transcripts after data analysis has been exhausted.

I used information cards during recruitment, but I did not list my private phone line. Rather I used a separate number that I discarded once data collection was completed. The voicemail box for the study was a generic message and did not state the name or provide description of the study. When I answered the phone, I asked potential participants for the purpose of their call before providing verification that they were calling the study number.

I. Data Analysis

I incorporated a combination of deductive and inductive elements in the analysis. In line with grounded theory, I began analysis immediately after the first interview. I used Altas.ti to organize and manage the data. As I advanced, emerging theory guided my sampling. In the following sections, I describe my data analysis in detail, delineating steps for inductive analysis as well as the deductive analysis that was guided by coping and intersectionality.

1. Open coding

Using Atlast.ti, I began by open coding transcripts line by line, substantively coding the data and allowing for inductive code development (Oktay, 2012). I created a codebook and assigned detailed definitions to each code. This codebook served as my guide in subsequent data analysis. Hennink et al. (2011) suggest other methods of inductive code development that I employed,

- I engaged in memoing, keeping track of my questions, connections, and reflections of the data (Hennink et al., 2011). I also made memos of theoretical hunches, and revisited these memos after substantive codes were established. This was useful in creating theoretical codes, those that reflected my theoretical framework, in later stages of analysis.
- I investigated repetition and changes in topics (Hennink et al., 2011).
- I created *in vivo* codes. These codes are important because they "may hold important meaning for the study population or signal cultural norms, particularly when they are mentioned repeatedly by different participants" (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 223).

I stopped code development when I reached saturation, "when no new issues are identified in the data" (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 217). I began to see repetition in codes after the

second participant. I then coded subsequent transcripts line-by-line, using codes from the codebook as my guide. As new codes emerged from later transcripts, I reviewed and compared previously coded transcripts to see if these new codes appear there as well.

a. Concepts & categories

After initial coding, I deleted repetitive codes from my codebook and collapsed redundant codes. After refining my final code list, I grouped the 300+ codes into 28 concepts. I then further grouped these concepts into 5 categories. Hennink et al (2011) offers two strategies that I employed. The first was identifying issues in the data and their connection to one another, trying to understand if there is a larger concept that connects them. I also investigated the dimensions of the concepts and categories, constantly comparing them to further identify their properties.

2. Axial coding

There are three components of axial coding: "1) identifying the variety of conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences associated with a category; (2) relating a category to its subcategories; and (3) looking for clues in the data about how major categories might relate to each other" (Oktay, 2012, p. 74). This stage also involves continued memoing, constant comparison, and theoretical sampling. While I proceeded with this stage by "comparing inductive issues or subgroups that were identified during analysis" (Hennink et al., 2011, p.210), I also used my theoretical framework as a guide.

3. Selective coding

Lastly, I looked for the core category by integrating and refining major categories. In theoretical sampling, I sought out data to saturate the core category. Specifically, the first West African participant who enrolled in the study presented new issues not raised in the

interviews of the African American participants who had been recruited at that point. Therefore, I made a targeted effort to recruit one additional West African participant to round out my analyses, eventually closing data collection to all other ethnic groups.

In the axial and selective coding stages, I referred closely to the theoretical framework guiding the study. In the next two sections, I describe how I analyzed the data to draw conclusions about participants' coping responses and the connection between intersectionality and identity.

4. Analyzing coping

In later stages of analysis, I used both deductive and inductive methods to make sense of women's coping processes. I coded substantively in the open coding stage, which helped me inductively discover women's coping strategies. The coping literature influenced how I made sense of, ordered, and presented the data. As aforementioned, after open coding the data, I grouped the codes into related concepts. I then further grouped these concepts into categories. To explain coping, I focused on one of the core categories: "Responses to domestic violence and their outcomes". Eight concepts were grouped under this category, and five of them were used to answer the research question, *"How did she cope with [domestic violence]?"* Within this category, I further grouped codes that reflected the coping framework, sorting them by types of strategies, reasons for using those strategies, how they were used, and their outcomes. Table 2 presents the analytic process for this category. I list the relevant concepts along with a few sample codes that were grouped under these concepts.

CODES	CONCEPTS	CATEGORY
HELP_1.seeking help from family HELP_2.reasons for using religion/spirituality* HELP_3.counseling	HELP	Reactions to domestic violence and their outcomes

LEAVING_path for leaving LEAVING_challenges after leaving partner	LEAVING	
SAYING NO_outcome SAYING NO_standing up for myself	SAYING NO	
PACIFY_reasons for placating* PACIFY_I learned how to survive	PACIFY	
OUTCOMES_his reaction to her response	OUTCOMES	

Table 2. Coping codes, concepts, and category.

5. Intersectional analysis

The primary focus of this study is theorizing the influence of intersectionality on coping. In the last stages of analysis, after the transcripts were coded and categories were established, I engaged in further analysis to understand how participants made sense of their identity on both the individual and structural level, and how this connected with their experience of coping. Within the "Intersectionality" category, I further analyzed the data by following Winker and Degele's (2011) detailed, systematic process for multi-level intersectional analysis. This analysis allowed me to examine the dimensions of the "Intersectionality" category, raising my analysis to higher levels of abstraction.

The first step was to further group the inductive codes I had categorized as "Intersectionality" into pre-determined classifications of identity constructions, symbolic representations, and social structures. I began by labeling and grouping those codes that described identity constructions. According to Winker and Degele, "individuals constitute their identities in delineation from others, while at the same time creating a sense of belonging" (2011, p. 54). This categorization included the codes that signified identity markers women used to

describe themselves, such as "woman," "African American," and "Muslim". This also included personality traits such as "nice" and "mature".

I also labeled and grouped those codes that described symbolic representations. Symbolic representations are the "norms and values that social actors have to deal with" (Winker & Degele, 2011, p. 61). This step describes social location by examining how participants see themselves in relation to others in society. From the data, these were codes that highlighted the values, ideals, beliefs, and norms participants spoke to, and include codes such as, "being capable", "naïve", "I was raised to speak my mind", "good wife", "good girl", and "husband's role."

I then labeled and grouped those codes that referenced social structures. Specifically, I examined "if and how the interviewe[e], in their narratives about their everyday social practices, relate to…structural power relations – be it directly or indirectly" (Winker & Degele, 2011, p. 56). This included references to systems of oppression deductively delineated and inductively discovered, such as "race", "ethnicity", and "class."

The next stage of multi-level intersectional analysis is to identify the interrelations of the identity constructions, symbolic representations, and social structures for each participant (Winker & Degele, 2011). This step forms "subject constructions" – a preliminarily multilevel conceptualization of concepts. Winker and Degele note that a subject construction is highly significant if an identity construction also appears at the symbolic and structural level. Thus, I examined each participants' experience and identified connections between their identity constructions, symbolic representations, and social structures that emerged from their transcripts. This involved examining their coded data and writing a detailed memo for each participant explaining the interrelations of all concepts, concluding with a description of their subject

construction. This process was iterative in nature, "in which the first results are continuously compared with other levels respectively, hence widening analysis" (Winker & Degele, 2011, p. 60). This process then allowed me to compare, contrast, and cluster subject constructions across the sample, thus engaging the constant comparative method (Oktay, 2012), a step signature to grounded theory methodology.

GLOSSARY

Alhamduillah – "Praise be to God"

Allah - God

Ayah(t) – Verse(s) of Qur'an

Cleric*- An English term used to refer to those in the Muslim community who are seen as religious leaders.

Deen - Religion

Dua - Supplication to God

Imam*- someone who leads prayer, but it is also used to mean a person who leads a mosque, which is a Muslim house of worship.

Jumah - Congregational Friday prayer

Masjid – Mosque

Polygyny – A marriage in which there is more than one wife

Qadr - Destiny

Qur'an - The Islamic Holy Book that was revealed by God through Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him (PBUH)). Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the final reveled book of God. Muslims also believe in the books revealed to Jesus (Injil in Arabic; also known as the Gospel), Moses (Tawrat in Arabic; also known as the Torah), and David (Zabur in Arabic; also known as Psalms)

Sabr - "Patience" in Arabic

Tafseer - Exegesis of religious text

Ustadh* - Religious teachers.

**While these terms have slightly different meanings, they all are grouped under the umbrella of "religious leaders" in the text as those who hold such titles play leadership roles in Muslim communities.*

IV. EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This chapter address the question, "How does a black Muslim woman experience domestic violence?" I begin by identifying the types of abuse participants reported experiencing. I then describe how women came to understand their experience as domestic violence.

A. Types of Abuse

Women reported experiencing a wide range of abuses. Table 3 categorizes the 56 different abuses women reported into four types—physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression—based on the Center for Disease Control's definitions of domestic violence (Brieiding, Basile, Smith, Black, Mahendara, 2015). Definitions for each category of abuse are also explained in Table 3. For the purpose of this study, stalking is any type of abuse that happened after the participant left the relationship. Some forms of stalking can also be categorized as psychological aggression; however, if a form of psychological aggression occurred after the participant left the relationship or during a period of separation, I categorized this abuse as stalking.

Table 3. Types of abuse reported.

Physical Violence *"Intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm"*	**Sexual Violence** *Of 5 types: "rape or penetration of victim; victim made to penetrate someone else, non-physically pressured unwanted penetration, unwanted sexual contact, non-contact unwanted sexual experiences"*	**Stalking** *"a pattern of repeated, unwanted, attention and contact that causes fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone else"*	**Psychological Aggression** *"the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally, and/or to exert control over another person"*
• Hitting, including causing physical injury • Strangulation • Pushing • Kicking • Slap • Beating • Punch her • Physical abuse while pregnant • Grab her • Throwing objects	• Pressured her to have sex • Rape	• Put sugar in gas tank • Came into the home unwelcomed • Pulled a gun • Violated Protective Order • Followed her • Stole car • Poured paint on the car • No financial support after separation • Told landlord they were moving out while knowing she was staying in home • Reneged on shared business responsibilities • Constant following while in the relationship • Calling her after separation	• Preventing her and the children from leaving the house • Told her and her children/grandchildren to get out of car • Accused her of cheating • Asking her to kill him • Talking badly about her to others, including her children • Blocking her or creating barrier for her to advance her career or go to school • Criticizing how she dresses • Refusing sexual intimacy • Insults • Equating her actions with being evil • Financial abuse ○ Monetary manipulation: taking her money, not allowing her to have money, manipulating shared monetary investments

			○ No financial support while in the relationship • Yelling • Intimidating her friends • Isolating her from family and friends • Psychological manipulation such as reframing reality • Requiring his permission • Interrupting her sleep • Being overprotective and suspicious • Lock her out of home • Refused contraceptive and pressures her to get pregnant • Stealing passport • Threats • Taking her keys • Taking her phone • Restricting access to shared spaces • Use of religion and spirituality ○ Threatened with Voodoo ○ Manipulated religious text/teachings

B. Primary Appraisal: Recognizing Abuse

Coping is an active process, and the first step of coping is recognizing that one has something to deal with in order to respond to it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). To identify when women began knowingly responding to domestic violence, I asked participants to, "Tell me about a time you first recognized there was abuse in a relationship." Women reported not always knowing, at the time of the abuse, that what they were experiencing was domestic violence. Rashida exemplified this distinction in her first interview, explaining that there was a stark difference between the first time she was abused and the first time she equated her experience with domestic violence.

So, reflect on a time when you first recognized that there was abuse in a relationship.

Rashida: When I *recognized* it was abuse, not the first time I was abused?

No, when you first recognized.

Rashida: When I *recognized?*

Yeah. Can you tell me what happened?

Rashida: That's a tricky question because I can remember the first time I recognized that I was being treated wrong.

Hmm.

Rashida: Or that it hurt, but did I know it was abuse? I don't know if I know that. You know, I don't, 'cause the first time I can remember, this is not the first time that he hit me, the first time I remember thinking that this is bad was when I was pregnant and, you know, he hit me.

Had he hit you before that?

Rashida: Yeah.

Mhm.

> Rashida: But I don't know if I thought it was abuse. I just, probably at that time, you know, [thought] that he was my husband and he hit me. You know what I'm saying? I didn't like it.

Rashida was unaware that her experiences were called domestic violence until she was educated and informed about what constitutes domestic violence. Rashida further reflected, "I knew that, now, I was being controlled. I didn't use that language, because I didn't know the language, I didn't know, I wasn't educated on abuse. But, I knew that he was controlling me." Other women also reported not naming their experience as abuse because they were not educated about abuse. Asiya did not know she was experiencing domestic violence until she sought help from others.

> I almost kind of didn't really recognize that I was being abused 'til I would say I sought help, you know, and then I read or educated myself about specifics, but I just knew something was wrong.

Jamilah explained how her lack of education on domestic violence, as well as her feelings towards her husband, hindered her from identifying her experience as domestic violence.

> So I went on my feeling, more or less, than my knowledge about domestic violence. The cycle. I wasn't aware of those things at the time I was going through it. I wasn't aware. All I just knew was that he said he was sorry, but I didn't know that this is what they do. They say they sorry, they do it again. They say they sorry…. But I wasn't aware of that until I got educated on domestic violence. So when I was in it, I just, you know, was caught up in it. But when you get educated… that's why that's important. You know, to educate yourself. Yeah, to what it looks like and what abusers will do. What they do. How they do it. The steps that they take. Yeah. And then, so for the next time… it takes a while, I think. I mean, for me it did. I don't know. It takes a while. It took a while for me to kind of really wake up. And I sometimes even today I go back on that, as to why you know, it would take so long, you know, when you could see initially. Why you didn't listen to what someone said? Make it be the way you want it, not the way it is.

Jamilah later asserted that she, like other survivors of domestic violence, knew that what they were experiencing was wrong and hurtful, but they did not necessarily start to respond to the situation as domestic violence until they faced the reality of it by, as she puts it, "waking up".

> I'm not saying this to say that women are not in dangerous situations or helpless situations or financially or whatever way they can't get out. I'm not saying this. But what I am saying is that at some point, you're going to know within yourself that this is wrong.

> It's not working. You're going to know. Whether you want to verbalize it to anybody, you're going to know, deep down inside that this is not right. Because as a human, you're just responding to pain. You're responding to hurtful words, and you're not going to feel right. So when you start not feeling right, that's what I'm saying. Now that I'm out of it, I guess… now that I'm in another frame of mind, and not in that frame of mind, I'm really just talking to myself and saying, you know, "When are you going to wake up?" And when you wake up, that's when you start making a plan to get away. But you've got to wake up first from the dream. You've got to wake up. And then, when you wake up, that's when you're going to start thinking about your own self-survival. "What can I do? How can I get away? Let me think of how I could get away."

Jamilah's description of waking up mirrors the coping framework and the premise that one has to know they are dealing with something in order to have a reason to cope. Specifically, one has to realize they are dealing with abuse (not just a bad relationship) to respond to abuse as opposed to just another argument, hurtful words, or pain.

Participants reported, in retrospect, some of the early signs that their husbands were abusive. For example, Jamilah identified some of the signs she missed before entering into a polygynous marriage.

> How did you know that they were abusive in some way?
>
> Well, when I first met them, they were married already to someone else. And they were trying to talk to me as a second… you know, for a second wife. And um, I noticed some things that they were doing with the first wife and you know, but it's always portrayed that it's the wife or the other woman's reasoning why they're acting that way, or why they're, you know, talking to them that way. It's their fault. And then, when you come in the relationship, it appears that you're the person that they really need to be with. Yeah, that's how it's done.

Jamilah further described that she began recognizing signs of abuse in her husband's temperament.

> Um, well the first sign was, you know, the temperament of the person. They had a temper. Okay, they had a temper and they displayed their temper with other people. So that's when, you know, I started feeling a little uncomfortable, because I didn't know if that was going to be directed to me or when, you know, how far it would go? But I knew that they had a temper because they carried themselves in that manner with other people. You know, within my family, my step-father. They would get angry and say things, but then later on they would apologize.

Rashida described how she justified her husband's early abusive behavior.

> You know, but it wasn't a straight up hit. It was a, you know, pop in the back of my head, and then I told myself that, you know, he didn't mean to hit me that hard so I bumped my mouth on the windshield – on the dashboard – you know it really wasn't a fight, you know.

Rashida further explained that because she did not recognize her experience as domestic violence, she returned to the relationship after leaving for another reason.

> And that's (cheating) why we broke up. But uhm, I think if I had known [the relationship] was abuse, I probably wouldn't have been back.

As Rashida highlighted, one of the consequences of not recognizing one is experiencing domestic violence is returning to, or prolonged stay in, the abusive relationship. Jamilah further explained how this state of not knowing puts one in danger of increasingly severe violence.

> Then, if you listen to him and you're going in anyway. Then you see, "Okay, he hollered at me today. Maybe he's upset. Oh, he pushed me. Oh, he said he sorry. Oh, he slapped me. He said I said something that upset him." Okay, well then you start feeling responsible. "I didn't get… it's okay. I'm not going to… I'm going to leave him alone. I'm not going to talk to him until he feels better. I'll go talk to him after I think he's calmed down." And then he gets worse and worse and it escalates.

Women went on to describe how they came to finally recognize their partners were violent towards them. For Rashida, it was not until her husband left physical marks that she knew her relationship was abusive.

> I'm trying to think, I think maybe when I really knew it was abuse {pause} was when I was hit and there was a mark. Yeah…there was a mark…. The two times that I remember that stand out in my mind—because I'm talking 30somthing years ago—is one time I remember that—because I had been slapped or hit in the face before this time, I covered my face with my hand, and after it was over I had marks all over my hand.

In fact, it was the court system that named her experiences as domestic violence.

> I started calling the police and then of course after that then we went to court and so they named it you know as domestic violence so then I knew, you know. But I can remember when I was young, I mean when this first happened, I don't think I thought of it as abuse.

Her education on abuse helped her to realize that more than one of her past relationships was abusive.

> You know, so that's what I would do. Um, because it's only in my first marriage that I really knew I was in abuse, like with my other two marriages it's after the fact that I realized that was abuse too…. We always think abuse is physical, so because it was a mental control and emotional – I didn't even look at it as abuse in the other marriages, so in the –in the situation I didn't think, you know.

Rawhiya did not describe ambiguity in recognizing her abuse, but she did describe how she came to identify that her partner was financially abusive.

> And how did you know that that was abusive?
>
> Because of the stress that I was getting when his customers contacted me, and the threats that they would have about legal action, okay?

She further explained,

> For instance. Okay, the mortgage, and I had owned this property. And so I was glad that he never did pay in it. He offered to, but I told him, "No, that's okay. You can spend it on the business." It's just that when it got to the point where he wasn't contributing anything is when I felt… and then he told me that he really didn't have a job and trying to pretend he was going to work. I thought that that was abusive.

C. Conclusion

Women came to know of their abuse in different ways, and participants identified that their partners began abusing them, or showed signs of abusive tendencies, even earlier than they had realized. They also reported not recognizing the gravity of the situation. Jamilah reflected on this stating,

> And I think at the time I was going through it, I didn't realize the danger. I just kind of felt… I mean, I knew it wasn't right but I didn't realize the seriousness – the real, real, real, real seriousness of it – until after I got out of it and then revisited that experience. Kind of like, "I could have really get… I could really… I could be dead." You know?

Although women did respond and use strategies to keep themselves safe before they recognized that their situations were categorized as domestic violence, their strategies became more distinct

and intentional once they realized it was abuse they were dealing with. In Chapter 5, I describe women's domestic violence coping processes and strategies in detail.

V. RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: EXAMINATION OF THE COPING PROCESS

In Chapter 4, I discussed the context of domestic violence by examining women's experiences of abuse. This included describing how women came to know their situations to be abusive and more than just a bad relationship. In the coping framework (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), this coming to awareness is reflective of the concept of primary appraisal. As previously mentioned in the literature review, primary appraisal is when a person discerns if she is at risk of harm. Following primary appraisal is secondary appraisal, the stage of the coping process in which the person discerns if she can do anything to prevent harm, overcome the situation, or change the situation, and she decides how to act. This is then followed by the actual response (cognitive or behavioral), the outcome, and the assessment of that outcome. In this chapter, I will examine participants' coping processes from secondary appraisal onward.

Women coped with the abuse in four ways: "seeking help," "saying no," "pacifying," and "leaving". "Seeking help" includes the variety of ways women sought help for domestic violence. "Saying no" comprises the ways in which women resisted their partner and the abuse. Pacifying captures the ways in which participants placated their former partners to reduce or avoid further abuse and the ways they soothed themselves. Leaving encapsulates women leaving the relationship. In the following sections, I report the ways in which women responded to the abuse, looking at each type of response in detail. Specifically, I construct each section to reflect the coping process by describing women's responses (also known as coping strategies), the motivations for their responses (intended to represent secondary appraisal), and the outcome of their responses.

A. Seeking Help

"Seeking help" describes the ways in which women sought assistance, or considered doing so, from one or more of a variety of sources. All participants reported using at least one of the following help-seeking resources:

1) Family and/or friends
2) Religion and/or spirituality
3) Services
4) Legal system/police

In the following sections, I describe the types of resources and their dimensions in detail.

1. Family and/or friends

Five participants reported seeking help from family and/or friends. Women utilized family members and/or friends in different ways including seeking their advice, gaining emotional support or concrete support in leaving the relationship. For example, Latifah sought advice from friends at school.

> I go to this school…. Sometimes, I ask the people, "What happened? Why my husband jealous me too much?" Some men they told me maybe [my husband] got a girlfriend, that's why he did it. [They said, your husband] think you did it, too. Because I don't know the system, I keep asking the people. [I also] told the lady, this my [neighbor], they tell me lot of things.

Asiya also sought advice as well as emotional support from friends, but she did so with caution. Specifically, she found ways to test if she could trust her friend by first stating that she was seeking help for someone else.

> And you know my mind just kept going to her….like this person seems like a resourceful person. And I tried to reach out to her…. So eventually I went back to that person. And I sent them a message, and I - and then my brother and I, we were like okay, I want to push this person. I was like, my mind just keeps going to her. And… he was like "we don't know if she knows him or if you know, where her loyalty stands…. tell her it's your friend, tell her you're looking for a friend." So I told her, and she was emotional. She was like,

> "Oh my God, let me try this, let me call this person…. Please, I want to meet your friend, she needs support, she needs help"….And um, then I finally, she was like, "let's fix and arrangement with your friend"…. And I showed up at the person's door. And [she was] like, "where's your friend?" And I smiled; I'm like, "close the door". And she was in shock. I saw she was, she was shaking; she was almost in tears.

Rashida, Naila, and Jamilah sought help from their families. Rashida described how in one instance when she tried to leave her husband she, "packed my bags and took my babies and I went to my parents' house."

Naila went to her family as well, but she recounted feeling apprehensive about doing so because her relationship with her family was strained due to the abuse.

> And so, um, all this time, again, I was just, "Where am I going to go? What am I going to do?" I think I may have called home. I did find a way to get home. That was the hardest thing to do. I had started up relationships with my family again, because he had cut off relations with my family.

Jamilah sought help from her children. While Jamilah did not report having strained family ties, she did recall feeling embarrassed that she had to ask her children for help.

> So I was able to get home. [My children] came and got me. And it was embarrassing, you know, because I'm a grown, adult woman. My adult kids had to come and rescue me from that situation.

a. <u>Motivations</u>

Two of the participants, Jamilah and Asiya, discussed how they chose or chose not to use family members and/or friends for help. Their assessment of the situation and their predictions of potential outcomes influenced if and how they sought help from loved ones. For example, when she sought help from her children, Jamilah did not disclose the details of the abuse out of fear that her sons might retaliate and someone would get hurt.

> [My children] didn't know I was being physically [abused]… no. I just said, "I need to get away from him"…. They had seen his temper and said, you know, "He has a temper." I just need to get away from him…. Well, I didn't know what they may do. I didn't know if they confronted him, he may hurt them. I didn't want to get my sons involved, you know, in a confrontation. That going there, if they had a gun. I just didn't want to get them

> involved. They [still] don't know the details. Not the in-depth things, you know. I may have mentioned the slapping around a little bit, but after it was over. But I never told them. I never shared that with them.

Asiya decided not tell her immediate family about the abuse until after she separated from her husband. She knew that disclosing marriage problems to her family would taint their view of him, a situation that would make things difficult had she decided to stay in the relationship.

> This was weeks into the marriage…. And I have [siblings who are] married and I know that, you know, once your parents get involved, you hurt their child, they would never forget it even if I forgive him, even if he changes and becomes a good person - they never forget it. And so I'm like I don't want to change people's perspective about [him], [I] don't [want to] taint his image.

b. <u>Outcomes</u>

Women reported various outcomes of seeking help from family and friends. Rashida, Latifah, and Naila described how seeking help from their family during the early stages of the abuse prolonged their stay in the abusive relationship.

> I tried to go home, but my parents at that time were ignorant, and they said "no, go home and be a good wife." (Rashida)

> [My father] say "Okay stay [there], maybe one day he gonna change" [My father] don't understand. [My husband] keep doing. (Latifah)

> But in going back [to my parents], it was, um, more abuse. [My mother said] "Well, what did you expect? You're a Muslim. That's how they treat their women…. Why are you even a Muslim? Why are you even there? You already know how they treat their women. What did you think would happen?" And, of course, now "you're not going to be Muslim." I think I stayed maybe a few days [before returning back]. (Naila)

Rashida and Latifah's families' responses were influenced by their ideas of marriage and their lack of knowledge of domestic violence. A lack of religious understanding and tolerance played a role in Naila returning and staying in the abusive relationship.

Asiya and Latifah both reported favorable outcomes from seeking help from friends. Specifically, Asiya found that the friend she was initially hesitant to reach out to, was instrumental in helping her leave the abusive relationship:

> But I think like the first few people I spoke with were pivotal. My friend was there - you know there's so many times that something would happen and I was just all like, "you have no idea what you did for me."

Latifah also benefitted from seeking help from her friend and neighbor. The neighbor not only provided her with emotional support, but also facilitated another help-seeking strategy, calling the police. Latifah explained, "And I told…my [neighbor], [she] tell me lot of things…. She keep call the police."

2. <u>Religion and/or spirituality</u>

Five participants reported seeking help through religious and/or spiritual means. Religious coping strategies are defined as seeking help from religious leaders, and four of the five women who reported using religion and/or spirituality sought this form of help.

> And I told the Imam the situation, and told the Imam to tell [my husband] that I wanted to speak with him after Jumah with the Imam. (Rashida)

> I started going to a different masjid for Jumah…. And the Imam…I was able to talk to him, explain to him…. And…so I explained to him. "This is what's happening" (Naila)

> You know the African people, they come in? The Imam, and they come in my house (Latifah)

> And at that time I had called his [family member] who's a cleric and then another cleric. And um, they said they were coming… (Asiya)

Spiritual coping strategies are those in which women used intangible supports, such as seeking help from God through prayer. Four women reported seeking help through spirituality. They utilized spirituality broadly, including praying, seeking spiritual guidance from the Qur'an, invoking God, and engaging in spiritual cleansing.

> So I just kept reading [the Qur'an]…. Allah was, like, giving me guidance in… in Qur'an. Things like, "Those with patience persevere." (Naila)

> And [my husband] grabbed me by my neck. I thought he was going to try to strangle me to death. I remember telling him, "In Allah's name, let me go!" And then, in my mind, I started thinking about that story in the Qur'an and also in the Bible, before I became a Muslim, about Cain and Abel, and about Cain killing his brother Abel. So I said to myself, well, if that's the way to be, then so be it. That's what I said. (Rawhiya)

> I just prayed and cried and cried and cried, and I kept telling God like "something is wrong, I don't know, but something is wrong. Help me change it, teach me what to do, how I can be better, how I can please [my husband]". (Asiya)

> That's the voodoo….. [So] I bring the stuff to take a shower, then maybe [the voodoo] [will go away]. When I bring something to take shower, maybe that [voodoo] going to go [away a] little bit. (Latifah)

All women in the study are Muslim, but each found different ways of using spiritual components of religion to cope with domestic violence. Most of the ways appear inherently "Islamic" such as reading the Qur'an for guidance as described by Naila. Latifah, however, described a strategy that is not necessarily specific to Islamic practices - taking a special bath to cleanse herself from the harms of voodoo.

a. <u>Motivations</u>

Women reported some of the reasons they used religion and spirituality and some of the reasons they did not. As with the other help-seeking strategies, the anticipated outcome played a role in whether or not a woman used religion and spirituality, and how she used religion and spiritualty. Latifah used spirituality as a direct response to the abuse. Specifically, she used a spiritual cleanse to protect herself after learning her husband sought out voodoo to harm her and her children.

> Yeah, I call the people who tell me that [my former husband] do the voodoo a lot of times. They told me my husband doing something for my son. That night time my son fine, and [then] he [became] sick, [and] we go to the hospital… [My son] don't die right now but I need to be careful for that… I don't call [my former husband]. I don't care. And maybe that's why. He told me, he say, "Why you say you don't like me? You need to come back

> again…. I'm going to keep doing voodoo [until] you come home one day. You don't marry anybody."

Latifah, who also reported seeking the Imam's help in other abusive incidents through the marriage, described why she did not seek the Imam's help for her husband's use of voodoo against her. She explained, "No. I don't tell [the Imam], because they don't believe it. You know, they Muslim, they don't believe… [in] voodoo…. Because they're Muslim. They think you're supposed to trust…God."

Naila used two religious coping strategies. She began attending another mosque community and spoke to a religious leader about the abuse. She had few people with whom she could talk to about the abuse due to her husband's spreading rumors about her, thus she had to seek out a neutral setting.

> And so, you know, [my husband] started spreading rumors. And so like, anybody who tried to help me…. I went to another masjid…. [People asked] "Why are you here?" I was just, you know, covering, privacy. "I'm in the neighborhood and that's why I'm here now."

Asiya did not know that her marriage was abusive until near the time she left her husband, but she did know that "something was wrong". Her beliefs about what a new marriage is supposed to look like led to her decision to pray for guidance.

> I just started praying. I - again, I didn't recognize that it was abuse. I just knew that this was wrong. I knew that one, this is not what I want. And two, by at least basic marriage standards this doesn't seem right, you know? That even if I wanted something extravagant, someone so passionate, so romantic, at least there is a basal level that should be in marriage, especially a new marriage.

Rawhiya used spirituality because of fear, and she was greatly influenced by her knowledge of religious text. When explaining why she invoked God when her husband was strangling her, she stated "I felt helpless and there was no way that I could protect myself." She went on to further explain how her knowledge of Islam brought her comfort during that abusive incident.

> But in essence, I was thinking about with Abel, with him mention to his brother that okay, so if he did kill him, that would be him and Allah. And the murder, the blood, would be on his hands. That's what I'm thinking, okay, I'll be off the hook. That's what I'm thinking. But you won't. It'll be you and Allah to deal with…. I was scared at first. But then, when I started thinking about Cain and Abel. That made me feel more calm and peaceful. [I thought] "Okay, I may not be here but if not, then it's all in Allah's hands. I'll just leave it at that." So I believe that the religion is what helped me be so peaceful and knowing what was in Qur'an, I was grateful. That was, that helped keep me calm.

In contrast, Jamilah identified fear as one of the reasons she did not talk to an Imam about the abuse.

> Well, I would have imagined that I could have went to the masjid and spoke with the Imam, but I didn't. And I think I didn't because probably why most Muslim women don't, is exposing the Muslim brother. Exposing a Muslim man, exposing his image. You know, someone that comes to the masjid for dua and prays, is active in this community, who other people think would never be this other person behind closed doors. So I think the woman takes on a certain amount of responsibility of not exposing the faults of the man that's abusing them. I think that they take on… Well, it's like, "I'm not going to, I'm not going to. I can't do that. That's wrong." And you're steady, making excuses and being the doormat, because you're the one that's being abused. By not exposing him, it's going to continue. You're not even allowing yourself the avenue to stop it. Because you're not exposing it, you're just keeping it hidden for fear. And here again is fear. "Well, I'm going to have to go back home if I tell, and what will he do if I go to the Imam and tell? He might hit me harder next time or hurt me." It's all centered around fear, I feel. You're afraid for your life. You're afraid. You don't know what's going to happen. You don't know to what extent. You know, when someone gets angry, you don't know how much rage is there. And will they kill you? You don't know. And while you're going through that, your life is this danger. It's just a dangerous type of situation.

b. <u>Outcomes</u>

Seeking help from religion and spirituality produced varied outcomes. Women who reported seeking help from a religious leader reported mixed results. Some were supported by religious leaders: Naila reported that "[The Imam] said, "Okay, you've got a refuge here. And you need money, we're going to get money together for you and you're cool." Latifah found the religious community willing to help, and the Imam told her husband to stop abusing her.

> You know, the African people, if you got a something, they come in my house to tell him. Like, [the Imam] ask my husband "What happened? You never see any boyfriend?" He say, "I never see any boyfriend. But I just jealous." The Imam says, "Stop [doing]

> that….You don't need to do that. If you don't like it just divorce. You don't know. You don't need to do like this." (Latifah)

At the same time, while the religious leaders, like her family, instructed her husband to stop abusing her, they also advised her to stay in the relationship.

> [They told me] "just stay [with your] your husband. Don't listen to anybody. Don't look at anybody. Just look at your children." One day, he kill me, who gonna take care of my children? So I can't do that.

Asiya also reported feeling unsupported by some of the religious leaders she sought advice from at the end of her marriage. She was encouraged to return to the abusive relationship and have *sabr*, or patience.

> So many Imams were telling me, "go back and be patient." I'm like, do you unders- you guys preach *sabr,* but it's like you do not understand the *tafseer* of *sabr*! *Sabr* is not you slap me and I wait till you come back and slap the second. *Sabr* is, you slap me and I say "*Qadr* of Allah that you will slap me". That second one - no way. I remove myself from that aggravating situation. That is what I understand as *sabr*. This is not patience. Telling me to stay- if my husband has a little shortcoming, it's patience but I have to deal with…. But abusive - I lost like over 20 pounds.

Participants who reported utilizing spiritual help seeking strategies generally reported favorable outcomes. For example, Rawhiya's invocation of God had the effect of pacifying her husband; he stopped strangling her and left the home.

> He started kind of loosening his hand and then just… like that, dropped it. So it seemed like he was kind of reflecting upon what I was saying. That's the impression I got, my interpretation.

When asked what advice she would give others experiencing domestic violence, Asiya replied:

> The first thing I would say is talk to God. And talk to God first. First, because for me, I think that was what I did first and He guided me to- because I could have spoken to just anybody. I could have spoken to people who would force me to stay or give me wrong advice. But I think like the first few people I spoke with were pivotal.

For Asiya, using God was the first step to dealing with the abuse, and she attributed her use of prayer to connect her to the right people that ultimately led her to leaving the relationship. Naila also began to see signs from Allah as a way and means to eventually leave the relationship.

> So I'd go to Qur'an and I'd read Qur'an, and these different [*ayat*] would come up. Allah giving me signs. "Be patient. You're going to, you know, you're going to elevate out of it, you know. Things are changing and the strength of, and being prepared for." I'm like, "Okay, this is it. I totally am submitting to that. I'm being patient. I'm preparing. And things are going to change, and I'm getting out…"

Reading Qur'an not only provided her with comfort and reassurance, it provided her with guidance that would eventually lead to her using other coping strategies such as "saying no" and "leaving".

3. <u>Services</u>

Four participants sought help through social services. Naila, who called a domestic violence hotline, was the only participant to seek domestic violence services while still in an abusive relationship.

> I think I was online and I called the hotline. Domestic violence hotline. I think it was the first time I was honest and it was a stranger….She just listened to me cry on the phone…. She said, "You… how can I… how can I help? You need to leave. You need to leave. And you understand what's going on with you. Obviously, you're an intelligent person and is this what you want?"

Latifah, Jamilah and Asiya utilized services after separating from their husbands. Latifah and her children stayed in a domestic violence shelter. She recounted, "[S]omebody tell me to go to the shelter. So I go to the shelter, I stay like two years…" Jamilah and Asiya sought counseling after their relationships ended.

> So, I said all that to say that that, for me, was the end. I had a long journey of abuse, I would say. And after I got back and I got kind of settled with a place, I called up a counseling service for survivors of domestic violence and I started going, seeking therapy. And I've been going off and on for like, maybe eight or nine years now. (Jamilah)

> ....you know, I got to counseling and [the counselors] were like, you know, "[abusers] threaten you with what it is that is a goal or an aim for you… (Asiya)

a. Motivations

Women's motivations for seeking services varied. For Latifah, it was the outcomes of other types of coping strategies that led her to seeking help at a domestic violence shelter. After leaving her husband, Latifah and her children stayed with family. However, she sought help from a shelter after she and her children were no longer welcomed in her family's home. She explained, "Yeah. I got a family, and I go to my family house…. they tell me they don't like children (crying a little). That's why I go to the shelter…"

Naila called the domestic violence hotline because she was depressed and also felt she could not disclose her situation to those closest to her, like her brothers.

> I was in such a bad way. I was home alone. I was extremely depressed. I don't know. You know, I couldn't, you know. I couldn't tell anybody what was going on…. I think it was the first time I was honest and it was a stranger, and I think she [crying]… she just listened to me cry on the phone. Like, I don't know, forty-five minutes, or an hour, she just stayed there. She let me cry. She let me cry. And that was, um, because like, you know, I couldn't even show my adult brothers the pain. I couldn't… I couldn't do it.

Jamilah sought counseling because she began to recognize that she had been in a pattern of abusive relationships.

> And then, as I grew older, I kept getting into bad relationships, making bad choices or unhealthy choices when it comes to men. And I think at the end of this particular relationship I'm talking about was kind of like my rock bottom and once I realized that I hit rock bottom, in terms of allowing people to abuse me, was when I turned to therapy and I started getting help. So once I started getting help, then I was able to kind of unlock some things that were hidden, yeah…. After that relationship, I started going to therapy.

Rashida considered seeking services, but ultimately never utilized them. One reason was her perception of the services she would receive. Rashida described not seeking help at a shelter because of concerns about what her children would eat and what her relationship would be like with other women there.

> But I didn't go because something simple like, they gonna give us pork…. I'm like, I won't eat it but my kids is gonna not understand they can't have just something to eat. How my

> kids gonna- what [am I going to] do- you know? So, I don't wanna be in there because then I'm thinking, "scary" and like "I'm not really a fighter, what if I have to fight some women", you know, that kind of thing. So, I stayed home, I didn't leave.

Rashida was also interested in seeking counseling with her husband while they were still in the relationship. However, his resistance to it made it so that they did not utilize this form of help.

> …we had to go to court and I was insisting that we have counseling…And he, he had said yes….And I remember telling the judge, "but he said we're gonna go into counseling so I'm dropping the charges." And he didn't hit me for a whole year. But he refused to go into counseling.

b. <u>Outcomes</u>

When services were used, women reported satisfaction with the result. Naila described how instrumental speaking to a hotline worker, and the questions posed by the hotline worker, were in her leaving the relationship.

> And she asked me the right questions, and you know.... I could only trust a stranger, you know? And that was it. And she just asked me those questions. You know, "What are you going to do? Is this what you want? You understand the kind of relationship that you're in. Is that healthy? How is this affecting your children?" So by the time I got my voice back and that was um, that was the extra support, you know, that I needed, and that push to kind of put that…plan in place, you know.

Jamilah found counseling to be useful not only in her healing process, but also for maintaining her faith. As she reports, therapy helped her to reconcile her identity as a Muslim with the violence perpetrated against her at the hands of another Muslim.

> It took the therapy to help me. I don't know if I hadn't gotten the therapy, I don't really know where I'd be right now, in terms of my feelings about Islam…. I guess it's kind of like anyone that is perpetrating to be something, you know that they're not. And you have an image and this image is distorted by their behavior. Then, you're going to think that [everyone] is like that, after a while. Everybody's… nobody's real. You have people to leave Islam, it's because of that. A lot of women.

While Jamilah's realization that she had been in a pattern of abusive relationships led her to seek therapy, it wasn't until she sought therapy that Asiya realized that she had been experiencing spiritual abuse.

> ….even at that point I didn't recognize that it was a form of abuse until, you know, I got to counseling and [the counselors] were like, you know "[abusive husbands] threaten you with what … is a goal or an aim for you, and for religious women [abusive husbands] know you want to make heaven, [and] they know you want to be pious, so they threaten you like, 'you know as a good wife who wants to make heaven, if you want to make heaven… I (the husband) have to be pleased with you" irrespective of what I (the wife) wants. I (Asiya) didn't realize that.

Although the outcomes of service help-seeking were viewed positively, it is important to note that the use of domestic violence social services was viewed as a last resort measure by both the women who used them and those who didn't. As described previously, Latifah went to a shelter only out of sheer necessity after being kicked out of her family's home. Naila used services when she felt she could talk to no one else. Jamilah and Asiya sought counseling after having left their relationships. Women used services only when other strategies didn't work, they felt trapped, or their relationships ended and they were beginning the healing process.

4. <u>Legal system</u>

Five women reported seeking help through the legal system. Specifically, women called— or threatened to call— the police, obtained orders of protection, and contacted lawyers to settle disputes or legal issues that stemmed from the abuse, such as monetary disputes and immigration status concerns.

> …I'd called the police a couple of times when he got physical. I'd gotten out. I'd called the police. I'd gotten a restraining order, so there was paperwork in play. (Naila)

> I called the police a couple times. (Rashida)

> I called the police. I made the report. (Latifah)

> I ran into the house and he was banging on the door, screaming and hollering, you know. I said, "I'm going to call the police if you don't leave." (Jamilah)

> So I contacted a lawyer when I was down there and I was going to take him to court. I explained the situation to the lawyer. (Jamilah)

> I remember I had called the cops somewhere in between. (Asiya)

a. Motivations

Women were motivated to seek help, or not to seek help, through the legal system for one or more of three cited reasons: fear, previous [pseudo] effectiveness of using the system, and the encouragement or discouragement of others.

1) Fear

Fear for safety was a reason Rashida engaged in the legal system; when I asked, she was blunt as to why she called the police:

> You mentioned that you called the police a few times, what prompted you to do that?
>
> 'Cause I was scared [chuckle].

In contrast, fear was a reason Rawhiya did not seek help from the legal system. She viewed seeking help from the system as potentially more dangerous than not engaging the system at all. She explained, "And then I said if I go to the police, then it means that there'll be like, a court case. I'll see him again. And I just didn't trust what might happen to me physically." Further, Rawhiya expressed not wanting prolonged contact with her husband in a possible court case.

> But I didn't report it to the police, because I wanted him out of my life. And I said if I report it, then it had to go to court, and then I had to be in contact with him. And I didn't want to. I wanted that to be it.

2) Previous [pseudo] effectiveness

Women reported that their use of the legal system was effective in deterring abuse in the immediate period. Latifah saw an immediate result in using the police, and she found the use of police more helpful in curbing the violence than the use of religious and community leaders. She recounted, "[Religious leaders] say I can't call the police…. And the next day, [my husband] do again. So that's why I call [the police]…. [The abuse] don't stop. I keep call the police." Latifah further described, "If I go to the bus, [my husband] follow me in the bus.

That's why I called the police. I made the report. When I call the police, he run." However, Latifah also learned that while use or threat of calling the police was enough to stop abuse that was being perpetrated in the moment, the use of the legal system did not have the long term effect of stopping her husband's acts of violence. She explained, "Because every time I call the police, they don't do nothing. [The police] just come in…give me the police report and then left. [My husband] keep doing it again."

Rashida also described the limited nature of the legal system and how this affected her future use of the system.

> [After we were separated] he came in one night. So he pulled his gun on me, and I ended up getting out the house but he came out, so I got in my car and he was following me. So I drove to the police station, and then he-he went on about his business. And then I stayed in a hotel that night. I didn't go back home. Yeah. But, I didn't trust them…. I didn't make a report, 'cause I felt like it ain't -they wasn't gon' do anything anyway….[A]nother time I had an order of protection. We was separated…it didn't work. He didn't-he didn't come to my house or anything, but one time he was following me and I had parked my car and he moved my car, and I didn't know.....He stole my car.

Rashida described that in another instance of violence her husband had given her a black eye, and she called the police. Their response to the incident was to tell her husband to go for a walk. As she described in the above quote, her husband also constantly violated protection orders. These experiences made her know that while the police were a threat to her husband and could be effective in deterring immediate threats of violence, relying on the legal system was not a foolproof, long lasting solution to the violence she was experiencing.

3) <u>Influence of others</u>

Asiya's and Latifah's experiences highlight how friends and religious leaders can influence decisions about seeking help from the legal system for assistance in cases of domestic violence, and calling the police in particular.

> [T]he cleric I called…pleaded with me, "please don't. Don't involve the police. You know it starts getting messy. You don't want things like that". And I'm like, "yeah whatever. I… don't care." [The cleric said] "You know it's going to destroy his career, he's a [professional], if he starts getting…criminal records or things like that-" I'm like, "see, I'm not interested in destroying anybody's life. I just want my life back, that's all." So when the police came, you know I told them to go…[and] that I was fine. That…someone was coming….. And [the police asked my former husband], "did someone go in the house to talk to you man?" He was pretending like he was fine. He said "I'm just walking, I didn't do anything to her blah blah blah" I'm like, whatever. He's fine, then I'm fine, so [the police] left. (Asiya)

As Asiya described, the cleric's plea influenced the extent to which she used the police when she chose to do so. Alternatively, Latifah's friend's encouragement facilitated her calling the police. She explained, "The lady give me her phone to call the police…. The lady help me. She told me to call the police…. I call the police. And sometime, I spend the night at the lady's house."

b. <u>Outcomes</u>

Women reported a variety of outcomes of seeking help from the legal system. Latifah described how the police told her husband to stop abusing her, and how they also encouraged her and facilitated her leaving her husband.

> So that day, I call police. Police tell me…that man he's crazy. Leave him. If you don't leave, one day he gonna kill you…. That's the police…. Police told me leave that guy. So I leave. I don't want him no more.

Naila described how she called the police after a particularly violent incident, and her husband was arrested.

> I called the police. The police came. I got my… everything. I, you know, got my kids. "You've got to work it out, later, but right now, she wants to go." And you know, I think I had him arrested, because I think my lip was… when he pushed me he maybe… he did something where my lip. There was some evidence. My lip was swollen. There was something, you know. Physical evidence of what he'd done. Because, you know, in the scuffle, it was either his elbow or whatever.

Naila later got a second restraining order and stayed with her family. However, she eventually returned to the relationship.

> I filled out the restraining order. This was the second restraining order. I wasn't coming back after that. I had my kids. No money. I was able to go home. And that… that was, you know. That was kind of it for me. And don't you know he came back after that? And yes, I did go back.

Jamilah described how she used a lawyer to settle a monetary dispute with her husband, but this led to an escalation of violence in the form of a threat.

> I explained the situation to the lawyer. The lawyer sent him a letter. And when he got the letter, he called up and threatened me…. He said, "What are you trying to do?" And I said, "I'm trying to get out of this business arrangement with you and not be left with owing people thousands of dollars because you won't deliver the merchandise to them." And he says, "Well, I don't have to do it and I'll do it when I want to. And if you try to do anything about it, look out."

As previously highlighted, the system did curtail the violence, even when just used as a threat. For example, both Latifah and Rashida described receiving some sort of support through the legal system. However, both describe that the legal system was only a temporary fix for a much bigger problem.

> Because I'm tired. Yeah….Because every time I call the police, they don't do nothing. You just come in, you don't see. Just give me the police report. Because he keep doing it again. So I'm tired for this. So I go to [a new city]. (Latifah)

> And the order of protection didn't stop him…. We know that order of protections stop some people, but if somebody is [committed to hurting you]…they do break the order of protection (Rashida)

5. <u>"Seeking help" conclusion</u>

As presented in this section, women used different help-seeking strategies for the abuse, and they often used more than one strategy. Their use of help was influenced by a variety of factors, including the outcomes of previous help-seeking strategies. For some of the women, their seeking help facilitated another category of responses, one of which is "saying no."

B. Saying No

At some point in the abusive relationship, women displayed strategies of resistance. I grouped codes that reflected resisting their partners as, "saying no."

"Saying no" manifested in one of two ways. The first way was to "fight back." "Fight back" is defined as not backing down from the abuse (be it physical, verbal, or financial) and retaliating against one's partner. All forms of "saying no" inherently are ways to fight back from one's oppressor; however, I use "fight back" for those ways in which women "said no" as a counteroffensive, intended to hurt one's partner in some way.

Four women described "fight[ing] back. " In describing that she was raised to speak her mind, Rashida identified that she used her words to "fight back."

> I was also raised to speak my mind…. And so I was always an assertive type of person and I don't – I know he didn't like that, he didn't like that. And uh, so I would do that on purpose, that was, you know, part of my "Imma fight back" a part of my control.

Rashida further explained,

> I might've did some fussin' because I had a mouth. By that time I had learned to fight him with my mouth…. And one of the things that I did to fight back was I would say bad things about his mother… (Rashida)

Rashida, along with Naila and Jamilah, described how they also fought back physically.

> Umm the first time when he hit me, I hit him back. (Rashida).

> And he-he-he must've hit, punched me on the side of my head or did something – the door was closed, I remember being dazed…and um I kinda came back and I started fighting, you know. (Naila)

> Now, one time, I tried to hit back… (Jamilah)

Rawhiya described how she fought back by restricting sex.

> …I told him not to touch me sexually….And so then, I was trying to think of how would I retaliate. And that… so I guess that was my means of retaliation.

Two women described a second way of "saying no" by "standing up for myself." "Standing up for myself" was defined as ways in which women drew boundaries or spoke up for themselves in the relationship. While seemingly close to "fighting back," "standing up for myself" are ways in which women described defending themselves, not backing down despite consequences, and are most characteristic of acts of assertion (as opposed to counter-aggression or retaliation as described by "fighting back"). Hence, the difference between "fighting back" and "standing up for myself" is intent. This distinction is most clearly apparent in both Rawhiya and Latfiah's refusing sex from their partners. Latifah described "saying no" to-sexual intercourse.

> Because he say I don't like him. Because I'm tired. I come into work. Every day he ask me to [have sex]. I don't like it. He force me [to have sex]. If he go to the work, he force me. I say no. (Latifah)

In a previous example, Rawhiya also described "saying no" by refusing sex, and this was categorized as "fighting back. " However, in that example, Rawhiya's intent was to retaliate. Here, Latifah described "saying no" as a way of setting boundaries; thus, her experience is classified as "standing up for myself."

Naila described "standing up for myself" in different ways. In one example, she did so by refusing to clean up her husband's mess.

> I said, you know, "I need to do something," and that's how it started. I'd made dinner. He was eating. He took the food and he threw it against the wall. I'm like, I'm… I'm not cleaning that up, you know. "Well, whatever!" And then he turned it into an argument, you know? And then he's, you know. I'm standing up for myself. (Naila)

In another incident, Naila described being "disobedient" by going against her partner's attempt to isolate her from her grandchildren.

> And that's when it's like, "Well, no." And then he said, "Your grandkids can't come. Then they just can't come." I said, "Well, they are coming." And I was disobedient.

Naila's situation was further complicated by the experience of being in a polygamous marriage. Some of the abuse she faced was a result of the co-wife's manipulation. At times, Naila had to stand up to the co-wife as well as her husband.

> [W]hat made it an argument was that I was standing up for myself. …[I]t wasn't like I was you know yelling or anything; I was explaining okay, um, you know, this is how [the other wife is] talking to me, you know.... And um, I went to [the co-wife], and she went to him and said I went to her, [and] he came back to me [and asked], "What are you doing? Why are you doing"… I don't know what it was you know [she would] just [do] anything …just to...make it difficult for me…. Just whatever she could do to kind of sabotage it to make me uh – 'cause she already knew, you know, I'm going to stand up for myself.

1. Motivations

Naila, Jamilah, and Rawhiya described what led them to saying no, either in the form of "fighting back" or "standing up for myself". One motivation to "fight back" in a physical manner was their need to defend themselves from the abuse. As Naila described, she had to "say no" because if she didn't, she would not be able to leave the relationship and could likely end up dead.

> Because I'd already, I think made up my mind, once I started getting stronger, towards the end of the relationship. "One of us is going to die. And I'm going to fight. So if you try to hurt me, I'm going to defend myself like I'm defending my life and I'm not going to stop until I…" That's where I was at this point. Because, like, I already knew, you know, standing up in any capacity meant that he could do something to me physically. But I couldn't back down or else I'd be in the same spot.

Naila presented a unique case in which "fight back" and "standing up for myself" converged. Her intent was to stay alive, and the only way she could "say no" was by standing up for herself in a way that encompassed fighting back. She described in one incident, "He got loud. I got loud. Um, he got physical, and that's when, like, you know, that was it. And that's when I said [to myself]… 'You're going to kill me, but I'm going to leave evidence.' She further explained,

> I said, "Okay, he's killing me now. Let me scratch him, so that there'll be evidence under my fingernails." I don't think I told him that, but that's what I was thinking. "Before I go

> out, I've gotta leave something so he doesn't say it's something else, and when they do the autopsy…there'll be evidence."

Naila was motivated to stand up for herself and fight back because her life was in danger. She was also motivated to do so in a way that if he killed her, she would be vindicated and there would be no question of her husband's guilt. Rawhiya was also lethally threatened by her partner but, as mentioned the previous section, used a different coping strategy and sought spiritual help by invoking God. However, she made clear that the only reason she did not "fight back" was because she did not have the opportunity to do so.

> Let me clarify something… Before and after being a Muslim, okay, I… even though I didn't have a Qur'an to teach me, I know Allah said we can defend ourselves.... I can't see myself as standing there saying, "Go ahead, kill me." …. [W]ith the second husband, the one who tried to strangle me, it's just that I didn't have immediate access to any weapon at that time. Now, if I did, then I may have reacted differently. Because I don't think I would have had any problems of using one if I had had access to something. ….Because at the time when he grabbed me by my neck, I thought that he was going to kill me. I thought he'd strangle me to death. So if I had access to it, I believe I would have used it.

Rawhiya validated Naila's response: when a person's life is threatened, they have the right to defend themselves. Rashida, who hit her partner back in the early stages of the relationship, was told by his family member not to hit him again. However, she later reflected, "I remind myself that, I can't lose my power. I can't lose, no not my power, my right. I can't lose my right to defend myself."

Naila was also motivated to "say no" as an outcome of a previous response. Naila began "saying no" after receiving support from seeking help from a domestic violence hotline.

> So by the time I got my voice back … and that was um, that (the domestic violence hotline worker) was the extra support, you know, that I needed, and that push to kind of put that…plan in place, you know? And that's when it's like, "Well, no." And then [my husband] said, "Your grandkids can't come. Then they just can't come." I said, "Well, they are coming." And I was disobedient.

Participants also cited emotions as a motivation for "saying no". When discussing her response to financial abuse, Rawhiya described how her anger and fear of not being financially provided for by her husband motivated her response.

> …I told him not to touch me sexually. Because I didn't want to have any children, because he wouldn't be able to take care of them. And if I got pregnant, then I couldn't work. And I thought of that as a weapon. Yeah…. Well, one of the things I felt was anger, number one, because of the fact that he would not have the financial support if I became pregnant. So it was mainly anger.

When I asked Jamilah about how she responded, she provided insight into how she said no.

> And did you ever respond back the way he responded? So when he yelled, did you ever yell back? Or when he hit, did you ever hit back?
>
> Jamilah: Not face to face. I did over the phone.
>
> Was that because there was distance?
>
> Jamilah: Yeah.

Jamilah was aware that it was not safe to "say no" in person, and she further explained that this was based on the outcome of her previous experience of attempting to "fight back"

> But when he would yell or hit [in person], what would you do?
>
> Jamilah: Um, just get silent. Now, one time, I tried to hit back, and then I just got hit harder that time. So I didn't. I just said, "Okay, this is not the way to go, because he could really hurt me."

2. <u>Outcomes</u>

Generally, "saying no" led to negative consequences, although the severity of those consequences varied. One outcome of "saying no", particularly when fighting back, was receiving feedback that "fighting back" is wrong. For example, Rashida received this message from her family. Specifically, Rashida was chastised and told that fighting back in a physical manner was wrong, ultimately leading her to cease using this response.

> Because when I hit him back, his [family member] told me I was wrong and that I should never lift my hand to [him]. How dare…I hurt him. He had a little cut on his head. Now mind you I'm pregnant, and I hit him back. But, understand this I was so, I guess, I don't know, vulnerable or impressionable, that I listened to [the family member] and I never hit him back. Never, ever, not since.

Jamilah also received messages that "fight[ing] back" would lead to a negative outcome. As mentioned an earlier example, Jamilah was hit harder by her husband when she tried to hit him back, prompting her to realize the very real danger in "saying no." Because of the negative consequences to "saying no", Rashida and Jamilah began to respond in different ways to future instances of violence. Rashida, who had also received messages from family that she should stay in the relationship, described how she then began to fight back verbally. She described, "….at one point I took pride in being able to just chop him up with my words." In contrast, Jamilah realized she needed to leave the relationship. She stopped "saying no" entirely and began pacifying her partner. She recalled telling herself, "[W]hat I need to do is just don't say anything and work on a way of getting out."

For Naila, standing up for herself led to intensified physical abuse. She described how this was further complicated by her co-wife who would lead to Naila's need to stand up for herself, thus instigating physical abuse.

> [She would do] whatever she could do to kind of sabotage it to make me uh – 'cause she already knew you know, I'm going to stand up for myself. I'm going to stand up for myself. And he-he-he must've hit, punched me on the side of my head or did something – the door was closed, I remember being dazed

Although one consequence of fighting back was intensified abuse, in one instance, Naila's fighting back and standing up for herself led to her partner ceasing abuse. Specifically, when Naila fought back and left physical evidence by scratching her husband, he stopped abusing her because of the physical signs of struggle that she would have to explain to community members. However, this also led to him making up lies about the marks and blaming her for problems in the marriage.

> And [me scratching him] kind of threw him off. Because now he's got to explain. He's got scratches on his face. You know [he would tell people], "My wife, you know, she's crazy." And that was his thing. "You know, she's having these seizures, and you know, now she… I know something's wrong with her now. I mean, you know, I'm trying to be patient," You know. That's what he's telling the brothers, because I heard him, you know. "What happened to your face."…. "Oh, you know, my wife. You know, I'm trying to be patient, but you know, she has seizures and she has things she's going through."
>
> He told the kids I was crazy. "What happened to you?" "Your mom just…Something's wrong with you. Something's wrong." I'm like, "Yeah, something's wrong. You're right, something is wrong."

Rawhiya expressed a less intense experience; she identified that although her response did not elicit further abuse, it did create problems in her marriage. She recalled, "And [telling him not to touch me sexually] created a lot of animosity between us." She further explained, "He was angry, but I don't remember like any physical encounter or anything."

Latifah's "saying no" also caused further problems in the relationship. When Latifah's refused to have sex with her husband, he accused her of cheating.

> That's why I think he think I got a boyfriend, something like this. If he go to the work… he [asked] my daughter, "…You see somebody coming, night time?"…. Because he [was working] night time…. That's why I said, "You know what? I don't like you no more."

Rashida identified that one result of saying no – and of staying in the abusive relationship – was the danger of taking abusive actions. She viewed "fight[ing] back" as an abusive act, particularly when doing so became less about defending oneself and more about hurting one's partner.

> …but I have to remember that Allah sees everything, and I have to remember I was wrong because… I really believe that there's not a cut and dry line about who is the victim and who is the abuser. You know, because if you stay in a relationship of abuse, it ends up where both people are abusing. I really believe that. Because it's normal. Eventually, even if you never physically hit the person back, you're gonna do something to defend yourself. You know, and then once you stay in it, now you not only defending yourself, but now you really – you-you have some anger, you wanna hurt that person so now you might be the first one to do something. And it's not always physical. You know like I said, I know for a fact I verbally abused him, I know I did – (Rashida)

3. "Saying no" conclusion

Women reported "saying no" in a number of ways. As with "seeking help", their motivations for "saying no" varied, and they included fear and anger as well as the outcome of previous coping strategies. Their outcomes also varied, but generally "saying no" did not show positive results in lessening the abuse. In the next section, I describe the response of "pacifying", a strategy was that often countered "saying no".

C. Pacifying

In domestic violence literature, women's attempts to lessen the severity of the abuse or avoid abuse are defined as "placating." However, in this study, I use the term "pacifying". To placate by definition is to make someone less angry; however, some of the women's responses were intended to soothe and protect themselves. To fully reflect the breadth of ways women responded, and for linguistic clarity, I use pacifying instead of placating to show the ways women responded not only to their abuser but also to their own reactions and emotions.

"Pacifying" included the ways in which women avoided or lessened the intensity and likelihood of their partner abusing them. All the women described using pacifying as a response, but they shared different ways in which they responded under this category. One type of pacifying was giving in. Rashida gave in by taking on the responsibility of keeping her husband calm: "I responded by just, you know my responsibility was to keep this smooth, to keep this calm."

Naila described pacifying by giving in to her partner's demands for her money.

> So, you know, I was like, "No, no. This is mine." He goes, "Why? No. It wasn't. No, no, that was my money. I just asked you to hold it for me. Now you know, you know, no." So it kept going back and forth, and you know, it got to a point where I was just so…. I said, "Just forget it. You know, just take it. Just forget it." You know. I gave him the money.

Asiya also described giving into to her partner. In one incident, she gave in by apologizing to her partner after he was emotionally abusive, a scenario that happened often. She explained, "And

the same situation ended in the usual way of, I had to apologize." Asiya further described that near the end of the relationship she began to give in into her husband's demands out of apathy.

> And in my head I'm like, you're already doing what you want to do so I can't stop you, don't try to threaten me. I'm just like, I don't think it's a big deal like, I'm at home. If you need anything from me, let me know. I would do it…. I was already mentally checking out. So, it was just a pacifying mode.

Women also described pacifying through the emotional expression of crying.

> I don't know nothing. I just stay in the house. Every day, I stay at my house and I cry. (Latifah)

> And I didn't walk him to the door. That day I was like, just get out. And he left and I just cried, and cried, and cried. (Later that day) And I just broke down in tears beside him, and I was crying. And I guess that was his aim, was to break me. Because I - initially whenever he did stuff, I would just suck it up like, I mean this is too early this is weeks [into the marriage] And you know, he would shame me for not crying. [He would say] [t]hat I was pretending and I was controlling, that I was a liar, and I was putting up a facade and I'm just deceiving him. Because he wanted me to cry, and I wasn't crying. So that particular day, I just broke down in tears and I was just wailing." (Asiya)

> I just I-I cried… (Rashida)

Rashida and Jamilah described how they pacified by not saying anything in response to their partner's abuse.

> How did you respond [to him throwing the plate at you?]
>
> Rashida: I just ducked…. I had learned by then what to do to not get hit again [chuckle]
>
> Do you remember the feeling that you had?
>
> Rashida: He crazy and Imma be cool so he'll leave me alone [both laugh]. So I just ducked, and kinda was kind of quiet, and eventually he went away in another part of the house, I cleaned up the glass and then went to sleep

> Not responding. I shut down and I didn't respond….So I didn't engage. I engaged as less as possible. I need to don't say anything. Don't say anything. Just be very quiet…. So I immediately went into that mode after I saw that this person was dangerous…. So I would more or less use sickness. That was kind of my protectorship. "I'm not feeling well today." (Jamilah)

Rashida also pacified by not fighting back during an abusive incident and instead finding ways to protect herself. She described "I just I-I cried, covered my face, I was kneeling to just protect myself physically."

1. Motivations

Women had two motivations for pacifying: to calm the abuser or to soothe themselves. While the intent for soothing the abuser was always to reduce the severity of violence or to avoid violence, the underlying intent differed. Some women pacified their partner because they needed to survive the relationship with the intent to stay in it. Others pacified their partner to survive the relationship long enough to leave it. The contrast between these two sub-categorizations can be understood by examining Jamilah's and Rashida's experiences. Jamilah described learning how to survive and reacting in ways that would ensure her safe passage out of the relationship.

> And what I need to do is just don't say anything and work on a way of getting out." So I immediately went into that mode after I saw that this person was dangerous, and I need to don't say anything. Don't say anything. Just be very quiet.

Rashida, also learned how to survive. However, her survival was not directed towards surviving each individual incident of abuse.

> …I'm here, I'm alive – I learned -alhamdulillah – I learned how to survive, how to protect myself. Well in those situations, I-I began to learn that if you do this, to keep from getting hurt worse – you know what I'm saying

Rashida described further, that pacifying was "easy" because she knew it would put an end to the violence.

> But you see the only thing that I think was easy in a response, it was easy for me to respond uhh in a very, I think you would say, a submissive way. Because I knew if I didn't run my mouth or verbally fight back, that it would end. You know, the episode wouldn't last long.

Both Rashida and Jamilah received messages that fighting back was wrong, but this led them to two different conclusions as to why they needed to pacify. Before deciding to leave the relationship, Rashida pacified because she intended to stay and needed to survive within the marriage. Jamilah pacified when she planned to leave the relationship because she needed to survive in order to follow up on that plan.

Naila presented a different motivation for pacifying. Naila's situation was complicated by her polygamous marriage in which she found herself pacifying her partner and her co-wife to avoid abuse.

> I had to adapt to her, you know, and maneuver around her little things, which means I couldn't really be myself. You know, I couldn't stand up. Some things I had to take because I already knew that was a trap for me. And she's going to tell him, he's going to come at me with something. Even if it's verbal, it doesn't matter. Everything is connected to pleasing your husband and pleasing Allah and saying the pleasure of Allah, you know?

Naila also alluded to the fact that the length of the time she had spent in the relationship affected her reasons for pacifying her husband. She pointed to what she had invested.

> I should have been fighting him. But at this point in the relationship, we were married [over a decade]. I'd always… I'd been years now, into… and we had two kids together. So into, like… um he was too slick, you know? He just knew how to keep at it, keep at it. And so he took the money.

Another motivation for pacifying was the outcome of previous coping strategies, particularly consequences to "saying no." Other women who did not plan to leave (due to the previous outcome of other responses), found pacifying to be the safest response.

> But you see the only thing that I think was easy in a response, it was easy for me to respond uhh in a very, I think you would say, a submissive way. Because I knew if I didn't run my mouth or verbally fight back, that it would end. You know, the episode wouldn't last long. (Rashida)

> So I had to endure just being quiet and playing the sick role in order to keep him off of me. But it was very difficult, because if they sense that you are trying to get away, they may threaten you more, hurt you more. You know, if they sense. There's a way that you have

> to be where you can't let them know that you're trying to leave, because that can be dangerous as well. It's hard. (Jamilah)

Jamilah further explained,

> So I think that was still in me, and that kind of like triggered me to say, "Okay. If you try talking up and you saw where when you tried to challenge him, you saw where you're going to get hurt more, then you can't use that. So you've got to think of a way, you've got to use your mind, since you can't verbalize what you're really feeling to him. You've got to use your mind to think of how…"

2. <u>Outcomes</u>

There were several outcomes to pacifying. One outcome was that the abuse would not last long. The outcome of pacifying, regardless of the participant's intention, was that the abuse stopped or was lessened.

> So I just ducked, and kinda was kind of quiet, and eventually he went away in another part of the house, I cleaned up the glass and then went to sleep (Rashida)

Related to this, Jamilah reported that her pacifying led him to leaving her alone.

> So I would more or less use sickness. That was kind of my protectorship. "I'm not feeling well today." So I would say that and when I would say that, he would more or less kind of leave me alone.

Naila expressed feelings of regret, "I could have kicked myself. I should have been fighting him."

Asiya described that one outcome of pacifying was the inability to satisfy her husband even when giving into his demands.

> I was just taking my time. And at that point I was mentally checking out. I was like okay, I have to do me, I have to take care of me, so I tried to spend less time around him and then he would still complain, complain, complain. You know, so many things because he just wanted to have control over you. And in my head I'm like, you already doing what you want to do so I can't stop you, don't try to threaten me. I'm just like, I don't think it's a big deal like, I'm at home. If you need anything from me, let me know. I would do it. But you've eaten, you've taken care - he's like yeah, he can take his food by himself dah dah dah. He would just complain and like I said, I was already mentally checking out. So, it was just a pacifying mode.
>
> And you know, he would shame me for not crying. That I was pretending and I was controlling, that I was a liar, and I was putting up a facade and I'm just deceiving him.

> Because he wanted me to cry, and I wasn't crying. So that particular day, I just broke down in tears and I was just wailing. And he just looked at me - side look, this kind of just inconsequential "pssh" just, from, then (he?) just turned away from me. Turned away, just go to sleep, or got up and just left. And that was kind of that. And it was so many things, but yeah.

3. Pacifying conclusion

Participants' motivations for pacifying were varied but the intended outcome was the same: protection. Women used this strategy both before and after they began planning to leave the relationship.

D. Leaving

The last major category of responses to abuse is "leaving." "Leaving" encompassed participants' experiences of leaving the abusive relationship, including their motivations to leave/not to leave, how they prepared to leave, how they left (what their leaving process looked like) and what happened after they left (outcomes).

Women left the relationship in different ways. Some of the women described planning how they were going to leave or putting preparations in place. In describing how they prepared to leave the relationship, Naila, Jamilah, and Asiya explained how their responses to their partner changed. Naila, for example, began resisting her partner, moving from a pacifying to active resistance, or as I've named this response, "saying no".

> So that's when things started getting more threatening, because you know, you're saying something out of context and I'm standing my ground. Because I already knew, I'm on my way out…. I see what you've done. I see. I already have the Underground Railroad, literally. I'm- that's it. I'm on my way out.

Jamilah and Asyia began to pacify their partners, attributing their actions to illness or being kind, when they knew their plan was to leave.

> I engaged as [little] as possible and started using my mind to say, "You have to find a way to get away…" (Jamilah)

> …so I [did] my part [to] be nice to [him], I would respect [him]….because at that point especially….I knew I wasn't going to stay." (Asiya)

In addition to changing her responses once she decided to leave, Naila also described making preparations such as saving money.

> And I think at this point, I already was making up my mind to leave. I don't know exactly when it happened. You know, a little bit. But it's like, "Okay, I gotta go." And I realized of course that he was killing me. "I gotta go." Where to, how to? I'm dead broke. All the time now. I mean, no money to do anything. "Can I have two dollars for this?" "What do you need it for? I'll take you to the store. I'll pay for it. Five dollars? Where's my change. I need the receipt." I mean, that's how it was. So I was like… sometimes, I was like, you know, like two dollars… that's how I was saving money. Two dollars here, maybe five dollars from here. Cutting back a little on here. Taking the kids to get something to eat. I wouldn't eat. That's five dollars in the stash. Saving the money, saving the money.

Some women had to abruptly leave their relationships; such scenarios are called "escape". For example, Latifah did not describe making preparations to leave the relationship. Rather, she left abruptly, by jumping out of the window of her apartment, after the most severe incident of abuse when her husband told her to kill him. She explained, "… I jump from the window. Because I'm scared." Although she planned her escape, Jamilah also described how she quickly left to escape her partner.

> Well, what I did – because when I left, I still had a place in downstate Illinois, and I hadn't finalized that place in terms of terminating my lease. I still had my things there, you know. I still had rent going on and all of that. So I convinced him to let me go back and take care of my business. So he let me go there when he went to another place. And while he was gone, I moved from that place and moved into another apartment to try to escape.
> Finally, when he came back is when I told him that I wanted a divorce. And that's when he uh, you know… I ran into the house and he was banging on the door, screaming and hollering, you know. I said, "I'm going to call the police if you don't leave."

1. Motivations

Motivations for leaving were of two kinds: 1) motivations related directly to the abuse and 2) other circumstances. Motivations related directly to abuse included repeated abuse

and increased severity of abuse. Naila and Jamilah described how the repetition of abuse influenced their leaving the relationship.

> Naila: Um, so, um, I think I started planning to get away once he took that money from me. So, um, I'd started planning. I've got to go. Because his response was like, um, especially with the money thing and him keeping me broke all the time. Then that's when everything kind of like, okay, check. You know, he's keeping me broke.
>
> But as it continued, in terms of the hollering and yelling and hitting, I knew I had to get away. (Jamiliah)

Latifah, Rashida, and Jamilah also explained that an increased severity of abuse, even to the point of becoming potentially lethal, led them to leaving the relationship.

> Because it was something physical that I could see. It was the first time that he had left any marks. (Rashida)
>
> I jump from the window. Because I'm scared. He think I'm going to kill [him], maybe he's going to do that to me. (Latifah)
>
> All I knew, I had to get out of there, because I was up there, defenseless. He knew where I lived. I was scared to go out. I didn't know if he was going to be waiting outside, because I had challenged him by getting ready to expose the fact that he was a thief, more or less, you know. (Jamilah)

Women also reported other circumstances that led to their leaving the relationship. One of these other circumstances was infidelity. Rashida described how cheating was her primary motivator for leaving the relationship: "The first time we separated, it wasn't because I thought I was being abused. He had cheated on me and…that's why we broke up." Asiya described a similar motivation for leaving her husband. Asiya explained how her husband's infidelity coupled with the emotional abuse he perpetrated led to her exodus.

> …I was like, ok. Line drawn, full stop. I'm done. I'm like I was still contemplating, I should leave. I'm like there's like no doubt in my mind at this point, if there was ever a chance, there is no chance. These are like two big things that I cannot tolerate and will not take, so. I'm done. Infidelity and the abuse.

Asiya and Rashida both make a distinction between cheating and domestic violence. While neither woman classified cheating as violence, they did view cheating as a major issue that hurt their relationship.

Another circumstance was the influence of the media. Rashida described how a magazine article helped her to understand the potential effects of domestic violence on her children.

> And um what got me to change wa-was the beginning of me saying, "I gotta do this, I gotta get out of this". There was a article in Ebony magazine, and I never forget it had silhouettes. It had a grandmother, mother, and a child and they were talking about how you pass it on. And I remember, I don't want that- my children to live like this, I don't want to pass this on to my kids. So the beginning of keeping it from being generational, was that I had to get out of it.

Other circumstances also included the lack of love in the relationship. Naila reported that the lack of love in the relationship was part of the reason she left her husband: "Um, and there was no, you know, no love there anymore, and then it's like, why do I need to stay? For my kids? For what?" Other circumstances also included the outcome of other responses. After praying to God for guidance, Asiya found the answer to her prayers as another motivation for leaving the relationship.

> And, I said okay "God like, just let's make this a sign, let's make a deal. If I get pregnant this month, okay, I will take it that I'm supposed to be here. And I will work it out somehow. But if I don't, I'm done." And…once…I realized I wasn't pregnant, I was like okay….I started just researching what can I do.

As described earlier, Naila sought help which influenced her decision to leave her husband. She explained, "[T]hat phone call…. to the hotline, and the questions that she's asking me, that just made every, you know…. [I]t was impossible at that point to justify, you know, staying there, putting up with it."

Three of the participants cited various reasons why they did not leave the relationship. Rashida described how difficult leaving becomes over time, calling this phenomena "quicksand."

> …[I]f he hits you once, you leave. Because then, for lack of a better term, you're free. But if you stay there, he's gonna hit you again and when that second time and that third, that fourth, and that fifth now you locked up. Because, it's easier to take something if you've taken it before. It's harder to leave, because you didn't leave the first time. Ummm it's easier for him to do it again because he did it before. You know it's like a quicksand: you in it now, you in it. And then your life is evolving because now you're probably having children. Or [you] probably have more children, you have more time invested, then you have financial connections, I mean all of this stuff just keep piling on and it's harder and harder for you to leave; it's like quicksand!

As Rashida explained, "quicksand" described the piling up that happens once abuse starts. Not only does it describe the perpetual nature of abuse, but also the way in which other factors make "sinking" inevitable, i.e. children, financial ties, time, etc. Illustrating the phenomena of "quicksand," Jamilah described how having time invested makes leaving difficult. Specifically, she described how loyalty and dependence on one's partner presents barriers to breaking the ties.

> So I was afraid, but yet at the same time, I was just, I guess, trying to… It was a struggle inside, knowing that this is not right and I shouldn't let anybody do this to me, but how am I going to get away? So you're kind of like in a trap because the way it goes you're not really independent. Most of the times you're not independent. Some of the times, you are. But most of the time, you're not independent, so you're depending on them or you feel a sense of loyalty because you're married.

Naila also described what made leaving the relationship difficult.

> So the footnote to what I wanted to say is that although, you know, my response is very specific. This was the abuse, this was the abuse. This was the type and how it kind of came, over the timeline, there were so many things that were, that were rewarding and that were reinforcing me staying that, that that's kind of… and it was very subtle ways.

Naila found it challenging to leave because of the time she had invested and the subtle ways her staying in the relationship was reinforced through the work she was doing alongside her husband. She also shed light on how having children and losing financial connections is part of the "quicksand."

> I should have left. Again, and repeated my behavior by saying, you know, "No. I'm not coming back." Having young children - that always, you know, played a part. Again, you know, that played a part in it. Where do I go? Two kids. I'm older. I didn't – still didn't have my degree. Still really couldn't go living back home again. So my own personal

> dynamics of personal failure and trying to make it work. So maybe, I'm thinking maybe that was the only thing – I should have just, you know, bit that bullet of poverty. I mean, I'm still suffering under that, you know? And the poverty thing is a very, very strong element

2. <u>Outcomes</u>

The outcome of leaving the relationship was not always that the abuse stopped, and women reported facing challenges after leaving the relationship. For Rashida, leaving led to a new form of abuse: stalking.

> [Life after leaving] wasn't easy at all. And part of the reason it wasn't easy is because I started talking to another brother. Then all that jealousy and this you know, it was crazy stuff. He put sugar in my tank, I mean, just a bunch of crazy stuff but I eventually got through that.

Leaving was a complicated process that entailed multiple attempts of leaving and returning to the relationship. Three women left and returned to the relationship out of a belief that the partner had truly changed and that he was "sorry."

> … I realized after I got some help, that a lot of the behavior that I was exhibiting was behavior of someone that had been traumatized. Because why do you initially go into the relationship? Okay, and then you go into it, and you see that it's not good, you leave, but you'll go back. So why do you keep returning to that? Since you know that that's not good, or you don't feel good about it, but you keep going back. So why do you keep going back? Because I think that I didn't know about… I didn't have a full understanding about choices. In other words, you don't have to go back, just because they say they're sorry. (Jamilah)

> In between the two restraining orders, I think I did go back. [He said] "Sorry, I'm getting help. I'm seeing the psychiatrist. And you know, I opened up a bank account in both our names. I'm trying to change. I want to keep my family together. Something's wrong with me. My past." (Naila)

> And so when we went to court, at that time the woman or the abused person could drop the charges. Now you know the state picks it up. But back then the state didn't have to do that, so I dropped the charges. And I remember telling the judge, "but he said we're gonna go into counseling so I'm dropping the charges." (Rashida)

Rashida and Jamilah recounted that the return back was followed by a period of peace and then increased severity of violence.

> And he didn't hit me for a whole year. But he refused to go into counseling.… [W]hen he hit me…[a] year [later], it was the worst. (Rashida)

> I felt like… of course, he's telling me he's changed over the years. He's got counseling. And he doesn't do this anymore and this, that, and the other. So I fell for it, because I was more independent. And I felt that I couldn't… I wasn't… You know, in that position of dependency. So I thought I could handle whatever came my way. And also, I said.… "I'm not going to make any promises that we're going to get married but I'm going to just watch your behavior and observe you." What happened was that I went over there one day and he just… he raped me. (Jamilah)

As indicated in a previous section on help-seeking from family and friends, some women attempted to leave the relationship and stay with family. However, based on the circumstances they faced, they either returned to the relationship or faced another hardship that left them to seek another type of help. Latifah described her experience leaving and staying with family.

> I visited my cousin house, they tell me they don't like children (crying a little). That's why I go to the shelter to stay like two years over there. They said they don't like children any more. So I- somebody tell me to go to the shelter.

Naila and Rashida left multiple times before leaving their former partners permanently. Naila and Rashida went "home" to their families, ultimately to face pressure to return "home" to their husbands. In Naila's case, her family was unaccepting of Islam, a factor that led to her going back to the relationship. Rashida, who grew up a Muslim home, explained, "I tried to go home, but my parents at that time were ignorant, and they said "no, go home and be a good wife."

3. Leaving conclusion

Figure 6 is a concept map that describes the process of leaving based on codes from the data. The left-most portion of the map represents motivations to leave/not to leave, also considered secondary appraisal. The middle part, "leaving process," represents how the women made preparations to leave, how participants left, and what their leaving looked like. Everything after this point represents what happened after they left, or outcomes.

As shown by the map, reconciliation with the abusive partner could be an outcome of leaving. As described in previous sections, some of the women left multiple times before they finally ended the relationship. An arrow is drawn from "reasons for reconciliation" to "leaving pathway", bringing one back to the top to the section on motivations to leave/not to leave. Returning to the relationship is also connected to other "challenges after leaving". Once women reach "end of relationship", their coping processes changed. Many women still had to respond to abuse after the relationship ended (challenges after leaving). For example, after Rashida left her husband, he broke in to her home and she went to the police station. However, I classified these post-relationship abuses as part of the outcome of leaving, outside of the leaving pathway diagramed below.

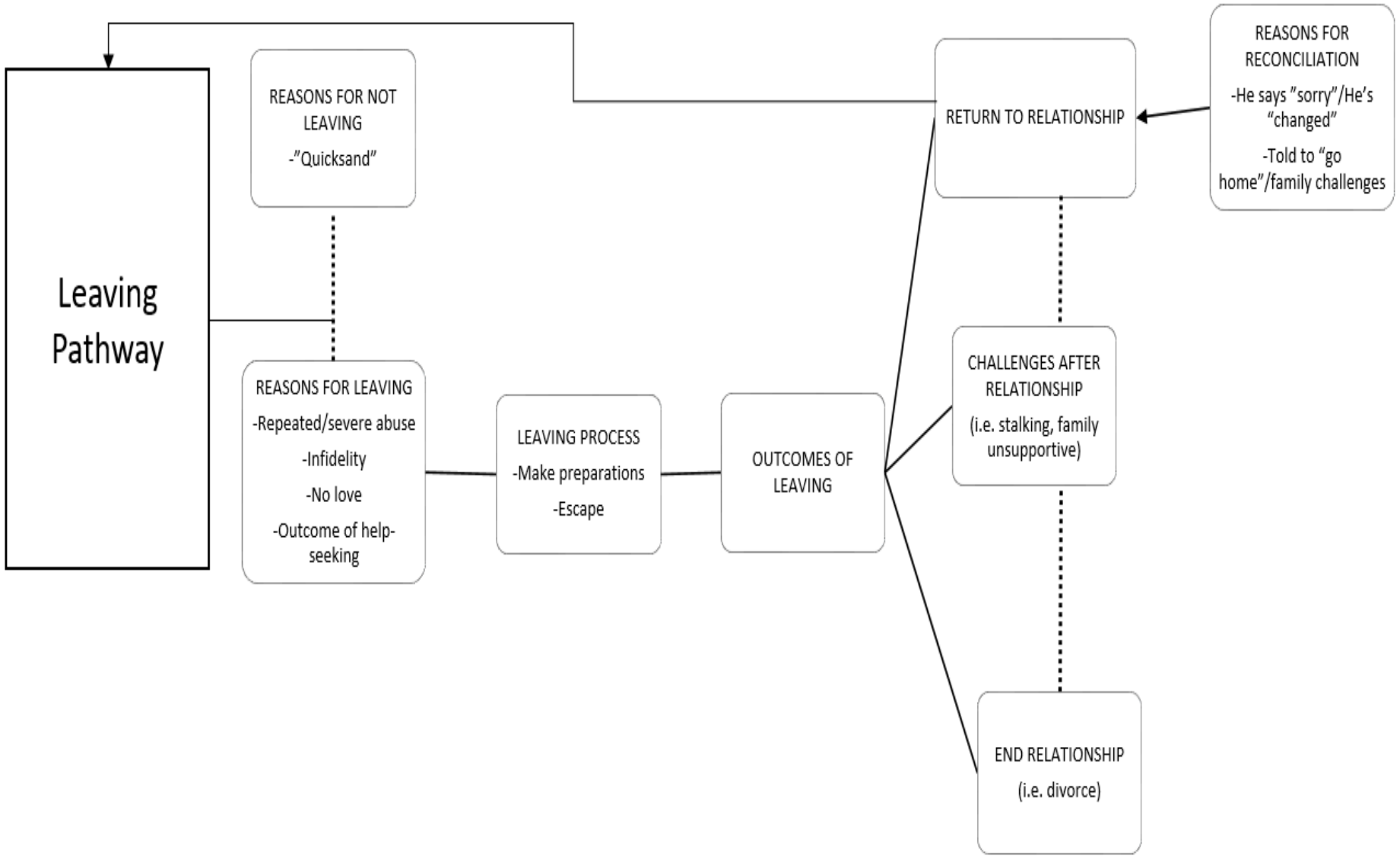

Figure 6. Emerging leaving pathway.

E. Conclusion

As described in this chapter, women responded to domestic violence by seeking help, saying no, pacifying, and leaving. These strategies were motivated by situational factors such as length of time in the relationship and severity of abuse, as well as their predictions of the outcome and outcomes of previous strategies. Further, their coping process was just that – a process. While there are differences in the dimensions of the four responses, there are some overarching themes that emerged in this chapter that describe how women responded to the abuse.

- **Theme 1: Women's responses changed throughout the relationship. Responding was a process, reflective of the coping process theory.** Responses, even in the same category, differed from woman to woman and incident to incident. However, all responses have a "how", the response itself, a "why", the motivation, as well as the outcome. In addition, women learned from previous coping strategies, further reflective of a cyclical process of coping.
- **Theme 2: One person could use several different responses at one time for an intended outcome.** In other words, one type of response can facilitate another or be an aspect of another type of response. For example, we saw that Jamila intended to leave the relationship, and in doing so she sought "help" from family as well as "pacified" her partner so as not to raise suspicion of her plan to leave.
- **Theme 3: Depending on the intended outcome and/or previous outcomes, some strategies were easier to use than others.** While Rashida was in the relationship, and before she planned to leave, she found responding in a "submissive way" easy because she knew that it would mitigate the abuse. In addition, while Rawhiya viewed fighting

back as a justifiable response, she could not do so when her life was threatened. Rather she had to use another type of response, invoking God, to save her life. All these strategies ultimately lead to women leaving the relationship, and all coping responses were rooted in the overall leaving process. In leaving, women said no, they sought help, and they pacified. Once women realized the relationship required leaving, they acted accordingly and used responses to do so –through pacifying or saying no or help seeking – there was no singular path.

In the subsequent chapter, I analyze how participants' coping processes were influenced by race, gender, and religion, the intersection of which manifested itself in a phenomenon I describe as "being the Good Muslim Woman."

VI. BEING THE GOOD MUSLIM WOMAN

In chapters 4 and 5, I respond to the two sub-questions guiding this study: 1) how do black Muslim women experience to domestic violence and, 2) how do they cope? In this last findings chapter, I address the overarching research question: how does a black Muslim woman's identity influence how she responds to domestic violence? In part one of this chapter, I describe women's identity constructions. In part two, I will investigate the various points of differentiation among the women, thus highlighting the diversity of their experiences. Lastly, I address this study's core category, a phenomena identified as "being the Good Muslim Woman".

A. Participants' Construction of Self

At the beginning of each interview, I asked participants to describe themselves. In response to this, women defined themselves using multiple social identity markers. In addition to describing themselves as black Muslim women, four of the women identified as African American.

> …I'm African American, I'm black you know and so, that's how I see myself. (Rashida)
>
> African American…. American born, African American, um, and that's it, yeah (Naila)
>
> I guess just the first part like I said about my religion. You know, Islam. I'm an African-American female. And that's about it. (Rawhiya)
>
> Um, I would describe myself as a mature, African-American woman, Muslim, who has had a lot of different life experiences. (Jamilah)

Women referred to themselves as black and African American interchangeably throughout the interviews, and I found it difficult at times to identify if women were referencing their ethnic identity, their racial identity, or both. Naila, for example, did not mind being referred to as "black" or "African American", as she views these terms synonymously. She described,

> And so uh you know, black or African American I'm fine with either one. My grandmother called me colored; she calls all people colored, and that was actually more accurate…

Two participants, Latifah and Asiya, identified as African as well as being from West African nations. Latifah, for example, described herself as African, but did not find this to be contentious with being American. In an argument with her husband, both he and Latifah acknowledged they were African, but she did not view this in a negative light as he did.

> My husband say, "I don't like this lady. Why you give [a gift] to her?" I said, "I don't care." Because he say she from here, [and] "You [shouldn't] like anybody from here. You [shouldn't] like American people." I say, "I don't care because I live here. The American people, African people, same thing. Because is person. So I'm give the gift [to] that lady. You don't like it… well?"

Some of the women also described themselves by personality traits. When Jamilah was asked how she would describe herself, she responded, "Probably as a soft-spoken, kind, easy-going person." Later in the interview she also described herself as, having "always been like a thinker, an analytical kind of person that thinks things out." Latifah described herself as "nice." Asiya also described her personality traits, stating,

> I would say I'm an outspoken person…courageous, bold, intelligent, I guess. Then I'm kind of introverted…. I'm kind of always in my head. I have a lot of thoughts and I like to be by myself, but most people would think I'm an extrovert but I'm a little bit of both or more of an introvert.

While all the women described themselves in various ways, some described an ordering of identity. Rashida offered a prioritization of one part of her identity over the other parts.

> Firstly, I describe myself as a Muslim. And, I would say that…my gender and my nationality like, are like right there together. Meaning that, above everything I see myself as a Muslim. It's like even if I didn't have any gender or a nationality, you know because… not just my physical is Muslim, my soul is Muslim. So but then physically I'm a woman and physically I'm African American, I'm black you know and so, that's how I see myself.

When asked to describe her identity, Rawhiya also first described her religious identity before

being probed for further descriptions of herself. Specifically, she stated, "I am a servant of the One who made me. Do you need more?"

1. Comparative identity markers

Participants named explicit identity markers, but in describing their experiences, other points of differentiation that shaped their experiences and responses to abuse emerged. Using constant comparative method, I further examined within group differences. This technique is signature to grounded theory (Oktay, 2012), but is also identified by Winker and Degele (2011) as being part of the intersectional analytical process. In the sections that follow, I describe the comparative dimensions that emerged and how these differentiations shaped participants' experiences of domestic violence. Additionally, I connect each dimension to other social identity markers, and highlight how these differentiations are also gendered, raced, and shaped by religious identity.

a. Immigration

Immigration status became an apparent point of differentiation for two participants, Latifah and Asiyah, who also identified as West African. In regards to how their identity influenced their responses, immigrant women had to consider how to ensure that their status was not in jeopardy. Further, both experienced abuse in which their partner tried to manipulate their immigration status. Latifah's partner stole her passport, leading her to end up with immigration issues.

> ….one day, he took my passport. Somebody traveled from my country…. [and they] told me that… "Your husband took your passport…. Maybe he going to divorce you, maybe he going to marry someone." But I don't understand that day. But now I got a problem [with my passport], too. Because the immigration called me. [They asked], "Why are you [in] your country?" I say, "I'm not in my country. I'm here." ….. Because my lawyer told me….They call me. I see the picture, it's my passport. It's okay, [date]. That's when I [was] pregnant…. How I can go to my country? And I go to the hospital on [the day before]….I go to the hospital, I got proof.

Asiyah's husband also attempted to jeopardize her legal status. Asiyah described that after she left her husband, he called community members to try to talk her into reconciling while simultaneously trying to manipulate and harm her immigration status. She described,

> Immediately [after] I left he…called his lawyer to write to immigration to cancel whatever it is we had pending with USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) behind my back. And he was still sending people to beg me [to come back]…. He wrote to immigration. But luckily, [an immigration officer] had spoken with me because of some address changes I kept making. And I told the [immigration officer] this is what is happening. So when [the immigration officer] got the letter [my husband had written stating], "oh she's a fraud, I'm not working, I'm not married to her again or whatever" They already knew. So the [immigration officer] didn't close the case. And I'm like, Allah takes care of you. Because, once they get the letter, they would just close the case, and I would not know. Maybe they would send me a notice and I would start running helter-skelter. But they got it, and the [immigration officer] was like, "Okay just come for the interview…. I will send you another interview [notice]"…because they sent one to his house…. [The immigration officer] told me what to file, change this and this, and we'll take it from there.

As Asiyah describes, had she not been actively in contact with immigration, her legal status would have expired due to the manipulation of her husband.

Having immigrant status also presented issues in how Latifah and Asiyah dealt with the violence, thus shaping their coping responses and outcomes. Asiyah's knowledge of the delicate nature of her immigration status was one factor that led her to use the pacifying response by keeping things calm while also planning to leave.

> I had nothing…. I was changing my status from a student visa to trying to get a green card based on marriage…. He knew this, we filed it together, so he knew. And my work permit was not yet out… so basically, it was like pending adjustment of status. But if I needed to travel at that point, I had nothing. If the police arrested me and said show your papers, well except they would accept pending application, otherwise I probably could have been illegal at that point…. I couldn't be sure that my…visa, was still active. And he knew that. So, I started researching like, what can I do. I was just lost and I didn't know, I was just taking my time. And at that point I was mentally checking out. I was like okay, I have to do me, I have to take care of me, so I tried to spend less time around him...

Latifah's immigration status, specifically not having "papers", was a barrier to her becoming independent from the shelter in a new city. Eventually, she moved back to Chicago where she knew the landlord and could rent a place of her own.

> I go to the shelter, I stay like 2 years and I don't find [an] apartment. I keep check[ing] [for an] apartment and they keep ask me for the paper….[When trying to rent] they ask you for the paper, the social [security], everything. So I don't have it. So that's why I have come back [to] Chicago. I don't have a paper. [The landlord here], he know me. That's why I come here.

Being an immigrant woman without a green card nor naturalized citizen status presented a unique set of barriers for the West African women in this study. Unlike American-born women, immigration status was both used as a tool for abuse and was a factor that shaped Asiyah and Latifah's coping process.

b. <u>Salience of race &culture/ethnicity</u>

Another comparative dimension that emerged was the extent to which race and culture/ethnicity was salient to participants. Four of the women identified as African American. When asked about their identity, Rashida, Naila, Rawhiya, and Jamilah identified as African American women, while Latifah and Asiyah identified as West African. However, how each group spoke to the influence of race and culture/ethnicity on their experience differed.

Despite all participants identifying as black by virtue of enrolling in the study, West African participants mostly spoke and attributed their experiences to culture and ethnic background rather than race. While Latifah had no issues with Americans, she received messages from her husband that, as an African, she should not hang around American people. This is partly because Americans, such as her neighbor, provided her support while she was in the abusive relationship.

> [My husband] keep saying, "I don't like American people"…. I say, "You live here. Why you don't like American people?" He tell my daughter, "Don't like American people. Is

> not good person." I like American people. I say, "I like American people….They help me. I make a lot of friend[s] [with] American people."

She also states,

> I see the American people, I say "hi" [when] I leave my building. [My husband] want to fight me. He say, "Why you do that? Because I don't like American people." I say, "I don't care. You live together. Same building. People are supposed to say hi." He said, "I don't like American people.

While Latifah did not have any issue with befriending Americans, the message that she was not American was reinforced by her husband. Thus, speaking to Americans created issues in their relationship.

Asiyah spoke of cultural expectations, and discussed that they are tied to the religious community. Specifically, she described how cultural expectations of her community created a barrier for her in responding to the abuse in certain ways. In describing her rationale and normalizing it across women similar to her, she describes how the culture shaped how she navigated the situation. Asiyah frequently referenced the cultural norms, for example, in describing how her family and her community responded when she left her husband.

> …another barrier would have been the culture. The first person I spoke with…was weary about having me stay over at her place because she was like, she doesn't want people to go around and say that, which was perfectly understandable, … that…she helped break my marriage…. And also, a barrier was again, the culture, my [family] who I was living with before I was married - I went back there and they ended up kind of kicking me out….. Because they're kind of like my parents and they were upset that I wasn't obliging their request to go back. And I'm like, you're thinking about what people would say, are you even considering my safety or what is best for me? And same goes for my father. I remember - again this would be cultural - cause my father… initially said I should go back. Initially kept trying, "let's talk to him find out."…. And me, I just kept praying … all [he was] doing by God's grace it will be in futility because I'm not going back. God is not going to make it work out. And my father did not change his mind about me going back until he personally felt disrespected.

African American women also alluded to the influence of culture. Rashida spoke of being raised in a predominantly African American Muslim community that was transitioning out of the Nation of Islam to Sunni Islam and how this impacted her experience.

> Now, some of the things that may have happened because I was an African American or black and I can't really say black across the board because then we talk about Africans and etcetera, but as an African American in the space that I have been in and-and then even period, there's certain educational barriers, meaning I just wasn't probably educated [about domestic violence] enough, my parents weren't educated [about domestic violence] enough. I wasn't as exposed to certain things, so I didn't have what I needed in that time. Meaning that I really didn't know about domestic violence back then. Nowadays women know it. They have some understanding of what domestic violence is. Then, I also was raised in a closed community, you know the Nation of Islam, we were separate from everybody, we handled our own business, you know. And that makes it even harder because you're ashamed because now if you tell one person, everybody's gonna know.

While as not explicitly stated, her ethnic identity played a role in how she responded, and this was tied to her religious identity. She talks about being raised in a closed community that was an offshoot of the NOI, a black Muslim organization whose roots are in black liberation.

However, Jamila, a convert, spoke of the African American Muslim community more broadly, speaking to how the African American community, not tied to the religious community, socializes girls, something Rashida also addressed. Jamilah connects her identity and roles as a Muslim woman to her identity as an African American woman and what that means. She describes how some are raised as African American women to be subservient to men, and that Islam becomes a tool used to reinforce the abuse.

> There are a lot of African American families [where] … the boys are preferred over the girls. And this is imprinted in you, so when you come into a religion that gives a man a certain amount of superiority to maintain and protect…- not to abuse- you fall into that …. You know, you may not even be aware yourself that you're falling into this, because you're so used to … feeling this way about yourself, you know? You're modest, you're quiet. You know, in Islam, you come into a religion that's like that, where the women are modest. They do keep themselves in a certain manner. So it's just like an easy thing. It's so subtle…. So when you have an abusive husband, you know, you're in the trap before you realize you're in the trap. You don't even know you're in the trap.

In these ways, Jamilah, Rashida, Latiah, and Asiyah, while all coming from different cultures acknowledge the role that culture plays in their experience. Jamilah, much in the same way Latifah and Asiya speak to culture, also discusses socialization in the African American

community that shaped her and influenced her religious and gender identity. Rashida talks about ethnicity in terms of communal structure and how it shaped her seeking help outside of the community, while also connecting culture to the way society socialized women.

Naila spoke most explicitly about race, the history of racism, and its implications in her help seeking, particularly from structures that have histories of abuse in black communities. A parallel can be seen in Naila and Latifah's assertion on how to solicit help from the police. Latifah gets a message from her community not to call the police, likely for cultural and immigration concerns, while Naila discusses it as a racial concern.

> …I'd called the police a couple of times when he got physical. I'd gotten out. I'd called the police. I'd gotten a restraining order, so there was paperwork in play. And, you know, I was a traitor. I was, you know, everything, because I'm getting…those people. [quoting her former partner] 'Why would I get a Black man involved with the police? You already know how they are.' And that was true. All of that was true. (Naila)

> Everybody mad at me because I call the police. I say, I call the police because I don't know what to do. The police help me. That's right. Everybody mad at me…. African people. Everybody. Because Imam (religious leader) say you can't call police [on] your husband…. Because he say I'm African, I can't call the [police]…. Yeah because the African people, you can't call the police on your husband…. You're supposed to…call the African people to come… (Latifah)

Both Latifah and Naila identify the fear of the influence of police on their communities, but for different intersectional reasons.

Rawhiya did not speak to her experience as an African American or black woman, but addressed her experience from a religious standpoint. Race is not as salient to her story – she talks about being African American, but she does not talk about this in a way that impacts her experiences.

I present the salience of race and culture on a continuum. Whether these are truly different is arguable, but both – salience of culture and salience of race as explicit constructs – range in women's stories. Most importantly, regardless of referenced construct, both race and

culture/ethnicity had similar effects of influencing how women move through the world and produced similar concerns for navigating help seeking strategies, i.e. use of the police, use of the Imam, etc.

Most African American participants discussed both race and culture. To what extent African women viewed or navigated their experiences from a racial awareness is not clear; however, it is clear that they did navigate their situation through a lens of cultural awareness. Figure 7 represents where women fall on continuum of racial/cultural identity.

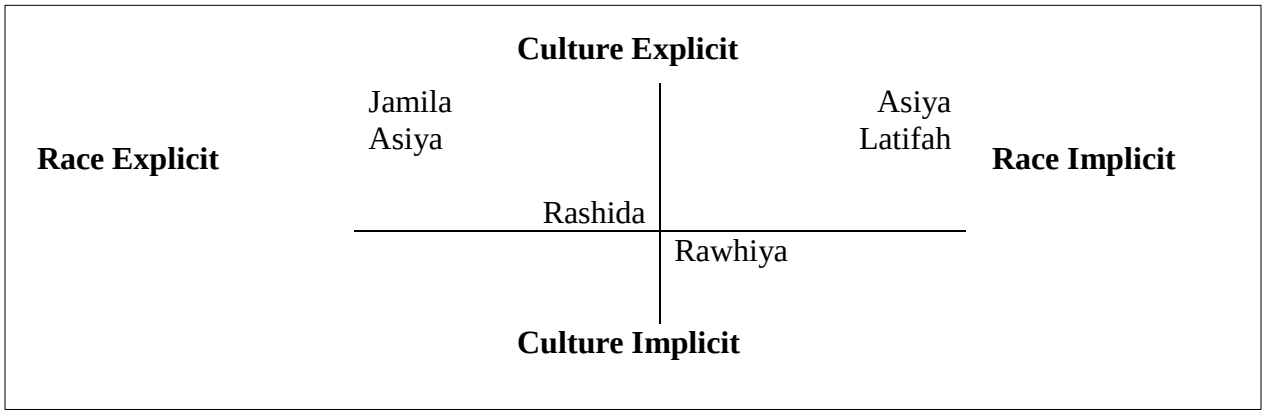

Figure 7. Race & Culture continuum.

c. <u>Being a Revert</u>

In the Muslim community, it is common to refer to those who convert to Islam as "reverts" as opposed to "converts". This stems from the belief that everyone is born Muslim, and that it is through socialization that people choose another path. Thus, "converting" to Islam is, in actuality, "reverting" back to one's original state.

Half of the participants identified as reverting to Islam later in life. While none reported reverting for marriage, two of the women explicitly discussed how their being a revert shaped how they viewed themselves, how this made them vulnerable to their husband's abuse, and how

they responded. When asked how her identity influenced her response, Naila attributed it to being naïve, a product of her revert status. She describes that she was,

> Very naïve, and like I said, he caught me at a perfect storm, because… I was a new Muslim… and had so much love for the *deen,* for Allah, for staying in the pleasure of Allah, for pleasing Allah. And I didn't know. And he had a good standing. He was doing good things. He was doing good deeds, you know? And there were women working with him, and they weren't like, at home or whatever….My naivety left me vulnerable. I didn't know. So if he said something, I took it at face value, because … I knew I was going to have to change anyway, because I'm a Muslim now…. If it doesn't fit with Islam, cool, I'm going to let it go. And I'm ready to embrace all the new things. Naila's husband was also her teacher, and as new Muslim, she followed what he said.

Particularly because he was a leader in the community who empowered women, including herself, to have leadership roles in the community, she valued and listened to what he said. She even noticed that how he approached women was different than Muslims in other ethnic communities. She describes the gender differences between what she had witnessed in predominantly Indian and Pakistani Muslim spaces in comparison to the predominately African American one she attended and could see the differences in roles of women in the mosque. In fact, her husband intervened in abusive marriages.

> I didn't, couldn't read all of the Arabic, and other places you go, you're kind of getting the same message. All the teachers are Arab and Indo-Pak. That's their culture. They're always going to put that message in there. Of subordination of women, of submission of women, and he wasn't like how I saw other brothers. He was counseling women who were being abused.

Thus, she viewed him in a positive light and listened to him and his teachings. This also made her feel vulnerable to abuse. It was when she began to educate herself on the teachings of Islam and the Qur'an that she encountered dissonance in what she had been taught and what she was learning.

> So when I started reading [Qur'an] that was an issue, too….Going to classes. My knowledge had to be less, you know? That was an issue for him, too. [He would say]… "Oh, so now you're trying to teach the teacher now?" That was a problem, because what he was doing was not Islam. "You're trying to be the teacher." You know, and it was an argument….So what happens with that? Okay, fine. Forget about it, I can either argue

> with him through it, or I can just, like, stop talking. So I just kept reading. I still, you know, I kind of… and Allah was, like, giving me guidance…

Jamilah also discussed the vulnerability and naivety that revert women, particularly African American women, are exposed to. She describes,

> You know, in Islam, you come into a religion that's like that, where the women are modest. They do keep themselves in a certain manner. So it's just like an easy thing. It's so subtle. And you're not even aware of it. You're not aware. So when you have an abusive husband, you know, you're in the trap before you realize you're in the trap. You don't even know you're in the trap.

In Jamilah's eyes, this is particularly true for African American revert women,

> I'm sure a lot of women, especially African-American women, they come into Islam. They look for that man, that spiritual, God-loving man. God-fearing man, who is going to protect them, and maintain them, treat them good. And, you know, they cover up reality. Because they want that so badly that they're not looking at what's really happening. They don't want to see it. So they make excuses.

Naila presented the additional layer of facing resistance when seeking help from her family who is not Muslim. She described how when she sought help from her family she was told, "Well, what did you expect? You're a Muslim. That's how they treat their women." Rawhiya, who was also a revert, did not mention such family issues, but she did report not having told anyone in her family about the abuse until years later.

Women who were raised as Muslim also expressed the notion of misconstrued religious teachings making women vulnerable; however, for adult women who are intending to submit fully to a new religion, they are particularly vulnerable because of potential familial isolation and an expectation they should be a good new Muslim.

d. <u>Polygynous marriages</u>

Two women, Jamilah and Naila, spoke about abuse that happened while in polygynous relationships. Both described the level of independence they felt they would have in a polygynous marriage. Naila describes,

> I married into a polygamous relationship 'cause I wanted…[t]ime on my own, wife on wife off, I was cool with that…. [T]hat's my preference, I would prefer that. I had children from my other marriage.

Similarly, Jamilah also felt a sense of independence in exploring the possibility of remarrying her former husband as a second wife,

> I caught myself saying, "Well, I'll be his second wife. Again." Well, the first time, the first wife was leaving. One of those type of situations. She was leaving. And I was coming in, okay? And this time, he was already married and I was going to be second wife and have my own apartment away from him. I felt more independent, had my own place, my own car. I felt like… of course, he's telling me he's changed over the years. He's got counseling. And he doesn't do this anymore and this, that, and the other. So I fell for it, because I was more independent. And I … I wasn't… in that position of dependency.

Both women had experienced abuse in previous relationships, so it is likely that this sense of independence was particularly compelling. However, their being second wives did not buffer them from abuse. For Naila, the abuse came from her husband, but was instigated by the first wife.

> I came in with you know with friendship, with openness, I want to stay in the pleasure of Allah, I'm not trying to take anything, I-you're expanding your family. I'm a part of it, let's get to know each other – she didn't. She didn't feel – she had different issues. Threatened by what- I don't know. Different issues. So um in conversations where uh she would just you know, do just trifling things just you know something just to-to-to cause … cause any type of fitnah in between him and I…

Thus in responding to the abuse, Naila had to pacify both her husband and the other wife.

For Jamilah, her belief that this would protect her in some way, coupled with her belief that he had changed, may have served to put her in a more vulnerable situation.

> So I thought I could handle whatever came my way. And also, I said, "Well, I'm going to just move down there and see how things work out. I'm not going to make any promises that we're going to get married but I'm going to just watch your behavior and observe you." So I didn't jump into the situation when I first went. But what happened was he had a house, a big house. And I would more or less kind of go and visit, and he was trying to get me to, you know, I guess meet the wife and see if we could get along, and all this and that. What happened was that I went over there one day and he just… he raped me. Yeah.

While Naila and Jamilah present different cases of polygamous marriages, their cases highlight an additional dynamic that other women did not experience. Although both thought such marriages would bring them a sense of independence in their abusive relationship, their marriage led to more stress.

e. Concern for socioeconomic status

The importance of socioeconomic status became apparent with one participant in particular, Naila, who talked about poverty being a real concern for her if she left her husband. This was due to his tactics of keeping her moneyless, and also in part to her having a high ranking job within the family business, but not having the certification to do that same job in another setting. Thus, if she left, she and her children would likely be impoverished. Socioeconomic status, and the fear of losing a certain standard of living affected her choices. She went on to say,

> The same stuff, you know, I could have been, like, any place else with the same questions. What's going to happen to me? How am I going to survive with these kids? I've been here for so long. I've got no money. I've got no marketable skill. I don't have any degrees. You know?

She also describes that even being able to process her emotions was a luxury. As a result, she constantly put her needs behind others. She explains,

> So afterwards, it helped with my children, because I always said you know, I really should have had a breakdown, I think a long time… I mean, physically, I did, but you know, emotionally, there was no time. There was always some priority. So I said, okay, I'm going to have to… that's a luxury of rich people. They go on vacation and have a breakdown, or you don't have a choice. But somehow, I'll do it later. You know, I'll take care of myself later. I'll take care of this situation later. It's on the back burner. This is really what needs to be taken care of right now, this immediate time.

Other women in the study alluded to having jobs and education. As previously described, Latifah also faced monetary struggles due to her immigration status, leading her to stay in the shelter for a prolonged period of time. For these women, lack of money made leaving and life

after leaving more difficult, particularly when coupled with concern for how to provide for themselves and their children.

2. Intersectionality and comparative dimensions

The comparative dimensions represent markers of difference amongst the sample. It is unclear if one woman's experience of abuse is worse or more taxing than another's based on her place in the various dimensions. However, the comparative dimensions suggest that within this sample bound by race, gender, and religion, women's experiences are qualitatively different from each other based on other factors and aspects of identity. Additionally, women in the study fit in multiple dimensions – so their issues reflect an intersectional experience. In the next section, I highlight the commonality across cases and how this led to the core category, *the Good Muslim woman*. Women's individual experiences across this theme are, however, shaped by the aforementioned dimensions.

B. Being the Good Muslim Woman

An overarching theme emerged that described how participants' identity shaped their responses to domestic violence. Being Muslim women was salient to all of women in the sample. Further, in describing their experiences, participants prescribed roles and norms of Muslim women, and they judged and were judged by theirs and others' understanding of the standards of what a Muslim woman is; participants spoke to what the Muslim woman is supposed to do and how she is supposed to act. The essence of what it means to be a Muslim woman was measured by what it means to be "good" in the various roles the Muslim woman is supposed to play. As such, being the Good Muslim woman was central to women's experiences and responses. How women responded to domestic violence was connected to their individualized interpretation of what it means to be a "Good Muslim Woman" (GMW). There

are clear, common meanings to being the GMW, and each of the women describe, in various ways, what it meant to be "good". In the following sections describe the key dimensions surrounding the good Muslim woman, incorporating examples from participants' experiences. These themes are:

- Theme 1: GMW is a contested identity construction
- Theme 2: Being the GMW has consequences
- Theme 3: GMW is shaped by gender socialization; this socialization is shaped by religious and cultural teachings as well as structural concerns of racism, sexism, Islamophobia, and their intersection.

1. Theme 1: Individualized, contested identity construction

The GMW is individualized and contested, meaning that each of the women ascribed slightly different meanings to this identity. For some women, their interpretation of being a GMW changed over time; what it meant to be GMW at the time they were in the relationship is not necessarily what they believed it meant at the time of the study interview. For others, their interpretation of being a GMW never changed, and rather aided them to leave the relationship once the abuse began.

In discussing the role identity played in her experience of violence, Rashida explained that she was hurt by her understanding of her identity at that time. Specifically, she described that her conceptualization of a Muslim woman hindered her in some ways, and that she may have dealt with the abuse differently had she had the understanding she later developed. She explains,

> Even back then I feel like I was Muslim first hands down. I remember that I've had arguments with people you know, [chuckle] "you Muslim first when you born, you can't tell me I'm African American first" you know – so anyway, but I think my idea of what a Muslim was, or what a *Muslimah (female form of "Muslim")* was, that hurt me.

She elaborated,

> …I thought – I'm saying I thought, I don't think this now – but I thought and I was raised to be believe that a *Muslimah (female form of "Muslim")* is a good girl. She's submissive, obedient, you know. You know, she doesn't ruffle the feathers. And I think that if I didn't think that, that probably when he hit me that first time, I would have told him "get away from me" and never married him.

Jamilah was taught a similar notion of "goodness" as a new Muslim. She explains,

> …all of those things I think molded me into the type of Muslim woman I was initially. Which was feeling, you know, that I needed a husband. And I should be obedient to my husband. And I shouldn't cause any problems and I should just go along with whatever his program is. And just be a good wife. Being a good wife is being a good Muslim. Being a good Muslim woman, being a good wife, being a good mother. These are all things that you're supposed to do. Don't make no waves, don't question. Just be good, like a good girl.

A number of points can be drawn from both Rashida and Jamilah's experiences. While they understood what it meant to be "good" similarly during the abusive relationship, both speak about this in the past. What the women believed to be good in the early years of their relationships is not what they believe equates "goodness" now. They are still presently "good", but both had to reinterpret the meaning of goodness. Jamilah discussed how she came to a new meaning of self – how she came to reconcile her experience and understanding of what it means to be a Muslim woman and her experience of abuse. She reflects,

> I think what I had to do was to briefly take out the Muslim part and just look at myself as a woman, whether I'm with a Muslim man, I'm not with a Muslim man. Whether I'm Muslim or not. Just a woman. And I had to come to that understanding after my experiences as being a Muslim woman and being abused. Because I didn't anticipate that once I accepted Islam…. I didn't think that that was going to be part of my experience as a Muslim woman… I didn't anticipate that as being part of my experience, but when I saw that it was, then there was some confusion for a while in there and trying to question myself, to say, "Okay, am I supposed to take this? Am I supposed to submit to this type of treatment because I'm a Muslim woman, or am I supposed to stand up for myself regardless of if this Muslim man is appearing to be holy or spiritual or obeying God?" Where in actuality, he's not. So I had to kind of remove, in my mind, the religious aspect of my experience. Just put it aside. Not leave it, but put it aside and then look at the picture in the realistic way. Well, here you are a woman. You're with a man, and the man

> is abusing you. It doesn't matter if he's Muslim, Christian, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist. He's abusing you. I had to… that's what I had to do, in order for me to not leave the religion, not go crazy. You know, I had to really look at it for what it was.

As a revert Muslim woman, Jamilah had to answer the question of how her experiences related to her understanding of Islam, and how Islam was being used as a justification for how she was treated. She understood that her role as a Muslim woman was to submit to her husband, but what she was submitting to did not match up to what she understood her husband's role to be. She had to deconstruct her identity and see herself as woman, removing the Muslim part, to be okay with leaving that abusive relationship. She also alludes to the fact that she needed to do this without losing her religion so that she did not blame Islam for the abuse she experienced.

In addressing their identity, Rashida, Naila, and Jamilah described themselves as having been "naïve". I previously highlighted how as a revert, Naila thought of herself as naïve and thus was vulnerable to misconstrued religious teachings. Jamilah shared a similar sentiment about the religious lessons she learned as a new Muslim from a family member who was also Muslim.

> And he was more or less my teacher. And very a knowledgeable person. He was right in what he was saying. But he wasn't practicing what he was saying. So in the beginning of my journey with Islam, I was naïve in a lot of things. And I believed everything he said, because he was so, so knowledgeable. People looked up to him. He was well-respected in the community. I looked up to him like a father figure, even though he wasn't that much older than me. But he had so much knowledge. And I just was amazed and kind of set under him, he was my teacher.

Rashida, while not a revert, described her impressionability, which in turn led her to listen to family members enjoining not to hit her husband even if he hit her,

> I remind myself that, I can't lose my power….no not my power, my right. I can't lose my right to defend myself. Because when I hit him back, is [family] told me I was wrong and that I should never lift my hand [him]….Now mind you I'm pregnant, and I hit him back. But, understand this I was so, I guess, I don't know, vulnerable or impressionable, that I listened to her and I never hit him back. Never, ever, not since.

While the three women believed "naivety" and "impressionability" shaped their understanding of what it meant to be "good" at the time of their abuse, they speak of it in the past; thus implying they no longer subscribe to this understanding of self, presenting a transformed sense of self.

Participants understood that to be a good Muslim woman, one had to be a good wife, and to be a good wife meant submitting to one's husband. Asiyah presented a direct contradiction to Naila, Rashida, and Jamiliah's understanding of "goodness". While Asiyah believed these tenets of "goodness" to be true, her interpretation of the conditions under which this role is performed differed. When asked about why her response was so different from other women, she explained,

> I never bought into that idea of being a slave to a man or to my husband. I never bought into the idea of…that forced submission…. People will say 'submission,' but there-there is forced submission and there is willful submission.

As the other women associated obeying one's husband to being "good", Asiyah did as well. The contrast was that while the other women had to go through a change to recognize that they did not need to stay in the relationship, Asiyah already had a frame of understanding that was distinctly different from the others – she did not equate submission as antithetical to choice. This did not mean that she was not manipulated through religious motivations. Asiyah described how her husband would use religious text,

> …he would keep saying to me that "women of paradise are the ones who..." whenever they make sure their husband is not upset with them irrespective of who is at fault. They would um make amends

However, because Asiyah left the relationship quickly, the type of abuse she experienced was qualitatively less severe than the other participants.

Latifah also appeared to navigate "goodness" in her help-seeking strategies. I described in an earlier section that Latifah sought the help of religious leaders to intervene in her

relationship. However, when she was affected with something she perceived to be counter to the religion – voodoo being used against her – she did not seek help from religious leaders. She knew that the religious leader would likely dismiss the effects of voodoo, a reality she viewed as real and as having real effect on she and her children. As such, she sought help through other spiritual means not prescribed by the religious leader. Because Latifah was aware of the beliefs of her religious and cultural community, she knew when and when not to seek help from certain sources, as some of her needs may be discounted and not seen as necessary or acceptable.

When I asked Rawhiya what advice she would give other black Muslim women facing domestic violence, she expressed that women should be independent, so that if abuse does happen, they are able to leave. She explained,

> I think I mentioned that part about sisters trying to keep themselves in a position where they can be independent. So if they are in an abusive situation, they won't feel like they'll be obligated to remain in it because of the fact that they're not self-sufficient, or if they have kids that they won't be able to take care of their kid. I think that's extremely important.

According to Rawhiya, being independent, both financially and personally, serve as sorts of protective factors in marriage, along with the guidance of God. To this extent, being a good woman is being an independent one. Additionally, her comment is directed specifically towards Muslim women. Thus being a good Muslim woman is being a self-sufficient one. Her advice mirrors her own experience and how she navigated her abusive relationship. When I asked why she responded to her husband's financial abuse by not engaging in sexual relations with him, she identified it as her way of retaliating. However, she also added,

> Okay. The fear of having a child who was not then taken care of, as far as the basics – food, shelter, clothing. And I didn't want to bring that upon another human being. Because I said I can take care of myself as long as I'm working and being self-sufficient. But because of the fact that, I said, I can't be working and well… you can work up to a certain point, I know, when you're pregnant, but it would get to the point where I wouldn't be able to work. So I just felt that would be unjust to another human being.

Rawhiya's understanding of her obligations as a woman and her husband's obligations as a man influenced her response. She knew that if she were to become pregnant, she would not be able to continue to be independent. She also believed it would be an injustice to her child if she could not provide.

As can be seen, to be good was rooted and shaped by gender and religious identity. Being "good" had different meanings for each woman. It was individualized, and for some, the meaning changed over time.

2. Theme 2: Consequences

In being the GMW, there were consequences. Some of these consequences came from the physical self and others were in community members' response. Naila, who referred to herself as "capable", identified that her body began to fail in her effort to keep everything together. She explained,

> Uh, in spite of financial difficulties. So I did get a second job, I could get out, go to work do what I need to do, and so the ability to just do what needs to be done at that particular time. And so, in the midst of a crisis, I can hold my own…. I look to solve the problem myself with whatever abilities I have…. Because I can do it. I'm capable, because I'm able to go in and find some type of solution…. It did not help me in the relationship because it enabled him to continue doing what he was doing…. Because the more he didn't do… the more I filled in…. He took advantage of that. Until, like I said, my health failed completely and that was what made things stop.

I have highlighted additional consequences for other participants in earlier sections. For example, Asiaya, by not buying into the idea of "forced submission", encountered consequences from her family and the larger community for leaving her husband. For other women, such as Rashida, Jamilah, and Latifah, a consequence of being "good" meant staying in abusive relationships for long periods of time.

3. Theme 3: Good Muslim woman & socialization

GMW is shaped by gender socialization; this and religious and cultural teachings as well as racism, sexism, Islamophobia, and their intersection. A number of the women discussed how the lessons they received on womanhood shaped their and other's experiences, and where these messages came from. When I asked Rashida how she believed being a black Muslim woman shaped her experience, she was clear on her belief that how women and girls are socialized is a problem. She explained,

> I think that it really doesn't have to do with me being black. It just has to do with me being woman. I used to think it was an American woman, but now that I've talked to people, and I've become more culturally and I traveled, it's just women period. We-we are taught as women and we're taught from a base of religion, we're taught from just a base of, uh, culture that we are the ones that sacrifice in a situation. If it's somebody that's gonna concede, it's the woman that concedes. Now, we're not told that in those words, but we're told things like, "well, um, go 'head and give that to them" as a little girl. Maybe two kids are fighting over something and don't let it be a boy and a girl, "Oh go 'head, let him play with that, you know how boys are." So we're taught that, and I think that we're taught that the one who doesn't make the trouble, you know, or doesn't argue, or doesn't fight back, it's the good girl. And we're taught to be good girls! Across the board, women are. So, basically that-that's it, but it didn't happen because I was black. It just happened because this is what all people teach their women. That's what I see. (Rashida)

Importantly, she highlights that gender socialization is shaped and influenced by cultural and religious teachings. Asiya makes a similar point in talking about the experiences of African Muslim women, as she explains how a prominent cleric clarified one verse of the Qur'an that is often used as a justification for abuse.

> He breaks down every word, and you know just compares it to everything, and brings it down to the context. You know he was talking about that first of all, everybody just says "*Al-rijal qawwamun*", the man is the "head" …. Two, that phrase, you're misinterpreting it. And you know he - he gave the analysis and I can't remember, you know even remember to paraphrase it, but you know it was funny because the idea is he was saying something like, you know the man is, holds a certain position. And he kind of holds that position….[and]it's dependent on kind of like his commitment. I'm loosely, loosely paraphrasing it. And then female part, like to woman is - maybe to be protected, to be this - and that is not dependent on anything. So it means that the man's authority is

> dependent, kind of like, it's kind of like it's dependent on him being appropriate. The woman, irrespective of what she does you should do you right to her. You should protect her, you should - and protecting does not mean, you know choke her or you should suffocate her…., but you have to cater to their needs, you have to provide for them, you have to be fair to them, you have to do this, you have to do that. And that was kind of like the summary, you know, loosely again, loosely paraphrasing it. I wish I listened to it recently.

Women also describe expectations that reflect other structural concerns, namely racism and Islamophobia. Naila connects women's experience of violence to the history of racism in society. She explains how black women's bodies have been expected to take both physical and metaphorical "hits,"

> Especially Black women, we have to learn how to take a hit… Well that's part of us always having to take pain. I think just growing up in racism, part of slavery, pain was very real for us – being hit, being hurt, being tortured – um and…you know, you can't fall apart because of that. And fighting and physically fighting because, again that level of anger and tension you know, we can't direct it necessarily at the people that are doing it to us. It would be nice to push back at the person who was doing something to you, as police or the you know – it's usually that invisible institution of racism that you cannot, you know, hit it.

Rawhiya describes how along with her family image, she took into consideration the possibility of feeding into negative stereotypes of Muslims.

> … I wouldn't want to be a bad example. I guess you might say that my retaliation, what I would have done in responding to it, I didn't want to set a bad example….For people in general. For, I mean, number one, for the religion. And, well, not number one. For that, for my family. And also for the religion. The reputation of, like, the religion, because sometimes it seems like people try to make Islam look bad anyway, so I don't want to make it worse, okay.

C. Conclusion

How women's identity shaped their response was connected with being the *Good Muslim Woman,* a concept that showed both the diversity and commonality of participant's experiences. The GMW, while explicitly connected to gender and religion, was also connected to sociocultural and structural influences. In addition, the diversity of women's experiences was

highlighted by the comparative dimensions that emerged related to being a revert, the salience of race and culture/ethnicity, immigration status, socioeconomic status, and polygyny.

VII. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the link between black Muslim women's identity and their responses to domestic violence. This investigation was guided by two sub-questions: 1) how do black Muslim women experience domestic violence, and 2) how do they cope with it? Inductively examining the intersection of race, gender, and religion, the overarching research questions was, how does a black Muslim woman's identity influence her response to domestic violence? In this final chapter, I discuss the findings. I then relate the findings to existing literature. I conclude by describing implications for social work practice and education, policy, and the community, and I identify areas for future research.

A. Sub-Question 1: How Do Black Muslim Women Experience Domestic Violence?

Two findings that explained black Muslim women's experiences of domestic violence emerged from this study. The first finding captured the types of abuse participants experienced. The second finding was rooted in participants' coping process and described how participants came to know they were in an abusive relationship as they identified this process.

Participants recounted a number of abuses across their relationships. They reported experiencing 56 different forms of physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression. While the types of abuse women reported is a significant finding in and of itself, more telling was how participants made the distinction between when the abuse started in their relationship and when they recognized they were in an abusive relationship. For example, one participant did not realize she was in an abusive situation until after seeking help from a friend for problems in her marriage, while another reported that it was the court system that named her experience "domestic violence." Three participants described how their bodies eventually informed them of the abuse through feeling pain, seeing physical marks, and enduring

stress. Although participants did not consciously know they were in a domestic violence situation, they did respond in ways to keep themselves safe. However, women's responses became more distinct once they recognized they were in an abusive relationship. One participant described this new state of awareness as "waking up," in which one recognizes the gravity of the situation and begins to direct responses to the domestic violence itself.

B. Sub-Question 2: How Do Black Muslim Women Cope with Domestic Violence?

How women responded after they realized they were in an abusive relationship was another key finding of this study. Participants described using four major types of coping strategies: seeking help, saying no, pacifying, and leaving. Motivations and the outcomes for using these strategies varied among the participants.

1. Seeking help

Seeking help encompassed the various ways women sought assistance for the violence, further categorized into four types: seeking help from family and/or friends; religion and/or spirituality; services; and the legal system/police. No conclusion could be drawn as to which types of help seeking strategies worked the best or the worst, but participants did report more favorable outcomes for some types over others. For example, women who used family and/or friends overall described mixed results, but those who specifically used family reported more negative outcomes, such as being told to return to the abuser, while those who reported seeking help from friends reported more favorable outcomes, such as helping them call the police or leave the relationship. Similarly, while grouped in the same category, religious and spiritual supports provided different outcomes. Women reported no conclusive outcomes in religious supports – some reported being supported by religious leaders while others reported being told to stay in the relationship. However, women who used spiritual strategies reported

receiving guidance and strength. One participant attributed her prayers to her finding supportive friends and leaving the relationship, while another reported that engaging in a special bath cleansed her and her children from the effects of the voodoo her husband tried to use against her.

While participants expressed it as being their last option, they gave indication that they were generally satisfied with the help they received from formal services. For example, one woman's call to the domestic violence hotline was pivotal in her decision to leave her relationship. Another described how a shelter gave her and her children a place to live after she left her abusive husband. And two women reported that seeking counseling for the abuse after leaving their marriages played a major role in their healing processes. However, it should be noted that only one woman sought help through services during the relationship. One participant provided insight into why women may be hesitate to use, or not use services at all. She described not going to a shelter because she was unsure if shelter workers would be able to cater to her needs as a Muslim woman. Participants' perception of services, along with the severity of the violence, appeared to influence their use, non-use, and time of use of such services.

Women tended to view the outcomes of the legal systems in a semi-favorable light. Some women used the legal system to help with issues that arose from the relationship (such as monetary disputes), but of the five women who sought legal assistance, four specifically reported using the police. Participants found the police to be effective in curbing the immediate violence, but not stopping the cycle of abuse. Further, legal injunctions, such a protective order, did not stop the abuse either. Additionally, women reported the social consequence of calling the police on their husbands. Two women, one African and another African American, described how calling the police was discouraged because of the risks the legal system posed for their communities. For the African community this concern appeared to be related to cultural

practices as well as immigration concerns, while for the African American community, this appeared to be linked to perceived racial injustice within the criminal justice system.

2. Saying no

Along with coping by seeking help for domestic violence, participants also found ways to resist the violence. Women described saying "no" to their abuser in two distinct ways, the identification of which can only be determined by intent. One way was by fighting back and encompassed the ways women said no as a way to also hurt their partner, whether physically, verbally, or financially. The other way was to stand up for oneself, which was most clearly defined as defense tactics that were characteristic of assertion rather than aggression or retaliation.

Participants were motivated to say no for a variety of reasons, including defending themselves from abuse, as well as feelings of fear and anger. Despite how they responded or why, saying no produced negative consequences for participants. The range of the severity of these consequences was wide, from receiving social cues that fighting back is wrong to experiencing intensified physical abuse by their partner. One participant described another consequence in that she felt she became mutually abusive, albeit in a less severe capacity than her husband, through verbal tactics.

3. Pacifying

Participants also coped with the abuse by pacifying their partner or themselves. Participants pacified their partner by giving in to their demands, not saying anything in response to the abuse, and apologizing. Participants pacified themselves by crying. Participants pacified either to calm their abuser or to soothe themselves. However, calming the abuser had more than one intent, it either was to survive the relationship with the intent to stay in it, or to survive the

relationship long enough to leave it. Thus, the primary motivation for pacifying was protection. While the general outcome of pacifying the abuser was that the abuse did not last long, one woman reported regret for not fighting back instead. Another indicated that she realized that she was unable to satisfy her husband, even when pacifying him.

4. Leaving

All participants left the abusive relationship, a finding which is not significant in and of itself as it was a requirement of enrollment in the study. Unexpectedly, analyses revealed a leaving pathway, one that encompassed how their coping process changed once they made the decision to leave the relationship for good.

Leaving was influenced both by the repetition of abuse, as well as other circumstances, such as their partner having extramarital affairs. One woman described how an edition of a popular magazine influenced her decision to leave, as it described the generational effects of abuse. Women also described what prevented them from leaving. This was explained by a phenomena called "quicksand," that described the piling up of responsibilities and social, emotional, and financial ties that makes leaving hard if one does not leave after the first instance of abuse (which can be difficult if one does not realize they are abused in the first place). Leaving, as the pathway reveals, was not always permanent. Three participants described leaving and returning to the relationship several times before making the final decision to leave and not return.

Some participants planned for their escape, while others did not. One participant described saving money in preparation for leaving. Another described jumping from a window during the last abusive incident as a means to escape. Those who knew they intended to leave began to respond to the abuse in different ways as a means of getting out of the relationship.

Two women described pacifying their husband, and another woman described how she began saying no at the end of the relationship by fighting back, figuring she would leave the relationship dead or alive.

The leaving pathway also reveals that even when women made the decision to leave and not return, the abuse did not stop right away. One woman described that her husband continued to stalk her for some time after she left relationship.

C. Discussion of Sub-Questions

Overall, the data revealed three themes in regards to participants' coping process. The first theme was that women's responses changed throughout their relationships and was reflective of a coping process. Participants could identity their motivations for responding in certain ways as well as the outcome of their responses. Further, the outcome of previous coping strategies informed their future strategies, also reflective of the process of coping. The second theme was that coping responses were not independent of one another, and participants sometimes used more than one type of strategy to facilitate an outcome. In attempting to leave, one participant reported seeking help from family while also pacifying their partner. The third theme was that some strategies were easier to use than others. For example, although she may have wanted to fight back, it may have been easier for her to pacify instead.

In answering the question, "how did women cope?" it is clear that women used certain key strategies. Additionally, while there was no single coping process, all of women's strategies were part of their overarching leaving process. Less conclusive were their collective motivations and the outcomes of the four major coping strategies used.

D. Overarching Research Question: Intersectionality and Domestic Violence Response

The overarching research question for the study was how does a black Muslim woman's identity influence how she responds to domestic violence. The latter portion of this question, concerned with how she responds to violence, is answered by the previous sub-questions. The first part of this question, her identity, is discussed next. Being the *Good Muslim Woman* (GMW) was found to be the core category that explained the link between identity and coping, a concept that reflected the intersectional nature of identity.

1. Participants' construction of self

One finding of this study that was of inductive importance was that women described their identity in various ways, and different aspects of identity were more salient to their experience of abuse. Participants' described themselves by culture, gender, race, religion, and even personality traits, revealing the complexity and diversity of this 6-person sample. This diversity gave rise to "comparative dimensions," or those aspects of identity that demonstrated the complexity of the women's experience. There were five comparative markers that arose from the data: immigration status, salience of race and culture/ethnicity, being a revert, polygynous marriages, and concern for socioeconomic status. The dimensions highlight how even within a common category, women's experiences can be qualitatively different from one another. Further, these comparative dimensions also intersect, as some participants were subject to comparison in more than one dimension.

2. Being the Good Muslim Woman

While comparative dimensions highlighted the diversity of participants' identity and their experiences, an overarching nascent theory unified the link between how the women described their identity influencing their responses to domestic violence. Specifically, "Being

the Good Muslim Woman" (GMW) explained how women interpreted their own identity, what they ascribed it to be, and in turn how they navigated their responses to abuse under this frame. This nascent theory represented the commonality and diversity of the women, and was comprised of the following key dimensions: 1) that being a GMW is a contested identity construction, 2) being a GMW has consequences, and 3) understanding of what it means to be a GMW is shaped by gender socialization, which is in turn shaped by religious and cultural teachings as well as structural concerns of racism, sexism, Islamophobia, and their intersection.

a. <u>Good Muslim woman: A contested identity construction</u>

When asked how they believed their identity contributed to their responses, some participants spoke of being "naïve" about what it meant to be a good Muslim woman, and this naiveté contributed to how they coped with the abuse. Both African American and West African participants spoke of how their upbringing influenced their thoughts on "goodness." "Goodness" was most explicitly linked to how they were socialized to be women and girls. Further, participants spoke of how both cultural and religious teachings influenced them. Not all teachings were bad, and not all women assumed the same understanding of identity. For example, one participant described how her understanding of religion was what enabled her to leave the relationship quickly, never understanding her role to be one in which she was forced to submit to her husband. Additionally, women described how their perception of what it means to be "good" was different at the time of the study interview than it was while they were in the abusive relationship. However, most participants were "naïve" at some point in their relationship concerning their religious roles as women, and that left them vulnerable to prolonged abuse.

b. Good Muslim woman: Being one has consequences

Participants described the consequences of being the GMW, and these consequences were connected to their and societal interpretations of how to be "good". Some participants received and internalized messages that to be "good" they should remain in the relationship, thus pleasing their family and community but at the consequence of sustained abuse. One participant described how her internalization of being "capable" also led her to stay in the relationship for a prolonged period. When women decided to resist the violence by "saying no" or leaving the relationship they also sustained further abuse, either in the form of being hit harder or stalking. While participants did report finding supportive people in their communities and families, there was an overarching consensus that their leaving, and even their resistance, would be disapproved of by others. As such, being the GMW is a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" identity construction, one in which there are consequences despite one's interpretation and performance of it.

c. Good Muslim woman: Shaped by gender socialization, religio-sociocultural & structural concerns

Women spoke about how culture and religion are used as tools for gender socialization. In her post-interview member check, Asiya interpreted how patriarchy influences women in her culture, attributing patriarchy to women's gender socialization and understanding of gender roles, which in turn shapes their responses to domestic violence. Similarly, in her interview, Rashida expressed her belief that people of all backgrounds use culture and religion as tools to oppress women. Participants also spoke of how discrimination based on race and religious identity shaped their responses. For example, Naila was explicit in connecting racism to her experience, as she viewed her use of police as necessary to curb the violence, but

problematic due to the negative outcomes for black men within the criminal justice system. Rawhiya expressed her religious identity influenced how she responded, citing her concern for not wanting to make Islam look bad, as Islam is already viewed in a negative light by the non-Muslim society.

E. Significant findings and the literature

The findings of this study affirm and contribute to current literature on domestic violence. For example, the multiplicity of abuses participants reported mirrors current literature that finds that nearly 70% of women who are victims of physical abuse and other forms of violence including verbal, emotional, sexual, and financial types of abuse. Additionally, just over 20% of domestic violence victims experience abuse from more than one partner (Thompson et al., 2006), a reality that was also true for four of the six participants in the current study.

1. Coping and the present study

The finding that participants made the distinction between when the abuse started and when they recognized they were in an abusive relationship supports domestic violence literature that identifies that there may be a disconnect between when abuse starts and when one realizes she is in an abusive relationship. Lindhorst et. al (2005) indicated that in the primary appraisal stage of the domestic violence coping process, one may not recognize their experience as abuse without someone or something informing her that she is in an abusive relationship. Likewise, participants in this study described that they did not come to recognize their experience as domestic violence until the abuse became severe, a friend informed them, or they went through the court system.

The finding that women responded to domestic violence by seeking help, saying no, pacifying, and leaving is also supported by existing literature (i.e. Goodman et al., 2003;

Shannon, Logan, Cole, and Medley, 2006). Although discussed at length in the literature review, but not as well examined in the study is the categorization of strategies. Specifically, it is well documented by general coping and domestic violence coping scholars that coping strategies can be categorized into types, most notably problem v. emotion focused and cognitive v. behavioral (Goodman et al., 2003; Clements & Sawhney, 2000; Hamby & Gray-Little, 1997; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Shannon, Logan, Cole, and Medley, 2006).

I attempted to capture a range of strategies by asking participants their motivations for their responses and how they thought about the abuse. Ultimately, however, the strategies I captured fall under the behavioral category. Identifying whether such strategies were either emotion-focused or problem-focused proved more challenging as such strategies are based on intent. Problem-focused strategies are those used to control the situation whereas emotion-focused strategies are those the women used to regulate the distress arising from the stressor, in this case, the violence. A strategy could be both emotion- or problem-focused, based on whether or not the person recognizes that what she is dealing with is violence and her intention for her response. Despite this challenge, most of the participants' strategies mirror those identified in the Intimate Partner Violence Strategies Index (IPVSI) (Goodman et al., 2003), a scale developed to categorize women's problem-focused coping strategies. Table 4 compares the IPVSI categorizations to my study.

Table 4. Comparison of coping strategies to IPVSI

Help-Seeking - Family and/or friends - Religion and/or spirituality - Services - Legal system/police
Saying no - Fight back - Standing up for myself
Pacifying - Giving in - Crying - Not saying anything - Not fighting back
Leaving

The highlighted coping strategies listed in the table are those coping strategies in the present study that are also identified by the IPVSI. A few of the strategies present in my study do not match up with the IPVSI. For example, the IPVSI includes "safety planning". I did not create separate categorizations for safety planning, and it is also not clear how crying and spirituality match up with the IPVSI. Based on the intent of using such strategies, crying and use of spirituality may be better categorized as emotion-focused strategies. Additionally, safety planning is embedded in some of the other strategies women in this study used. For example, in pacifying the abuser so that they could leave the relationship, participants engaged in activities in their preparation for leaving, such as saving money.

While I was able to identify the type of strategies participants used to keep themselves safe, less clear was the outcome of such strategies as participants expressed varying levels of satisfaction. Notably, participant's help-seeking from religious leaders and their use of the legal system provided inconsistent outcomes or less satisfactory results. Much of the literature on religious women and domestic violence have found that women of color and Muslim women

view and use religion and spirituality as source of strength (El-Khoury, Dutton, Goodman, Engel, Belamaric, & Murphy 2004; Fowler et al., 2011; Gillum, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006; Hassouneh-Phillips, 2003). While less is known about women's satisfaction with seeking help from religious leaders, studies of black and Muslim women have found that women are disappointed with the support they receive through their religious communities or encounter barriers when seeking help through their communities (Potter, 2005; Gillum, 2008; Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001).

2. Intersectionality and present study

The overarching finding that black Muslim women's responses were connected to their conceptualizations of being the *Good Muslim Woman* (GMW) emphasizes the relevance of an intersectional perspective, both in its name and deeper meaning. One key aspect of being the GMW is that participants learned how to be "good" through gender socialization. On the surface, this finding appears to favor a gender-centered analysis of domestic violence, such as the Integrative Feminist Model proposed by McPhail et al (2007) that incorporates other theories in analysis but maintains a gendered focus. Further, while Bowleg (2012) argued that, "no social category or form of social inequality is more salient than another from an intersectional perspective" (p.1271), gender served as the common denominator across participants' experiences. However, intersectionality scholars have also made it clear that identity is not additive (Bowleg, 2008, 2012; McCall 2005), and intersectionality is not about equal weighted experience along the various aspects of one's identity, but rather about examining how the various aspects of one's identity collectively shape experience. In other words, the finding that gender is central to black Muslim women's experience of domestic violence, but is also shaped by race, culture, and religion is not inconsistent with intersectionality. Further, the notion that

domestic violence is gender-based, but is also shaped by structural issues of racism, sexism, and Islamophobia is also related to an intersectional perspective.

This study utilized a specific approach to intersectionality, the intracategorical approach. Described in detail in the literature review, the intracategorical approach is particularly useful for examining within group diversity (McCall, 2005). The discovery of the five comparative dimensions provided insight into the complexity of domestic violence experiences among the six diverse respondents. As previously mentioned, immigration status was one dimension that shaped how participants navigated their relationships. The impact of immigration status on domestic violence is well-documented, and scholars have identified that being an immigrant can present additional barriers for women experiencing domestic abuse (Dutton, Orloff, & Hass, 2000; Erez et al., 2009; Fugate, Landis, Riordan, Naureckas, & Engel, 2005; Oyewuwo-Gassikia, 2016; Raina, Lohman, & Maldonado, 2014; Raj & Silverman, 2002).

Additionally, polygyny, a marriage in which there is more than one wife, emerged as another comparative dimension. Hassouneh-Phillips (2001) qualitatively examined Muslim women's experiences with polygyny and domestic violence. The researcher's finding that women in polygynous marriages had not desired to be in such a marital arrangement contradicted the experience of the two participants in polygynous marriages in the present study. However, Hassouneh-Phillips also found that co-wives, at times, were perpetrators and witnesses to abuse, a finding that mirrored the experience of at least one participant in this study who reported that the co-wife contributed to the climate in which the abuse occurred.

Another comparative dimension was the salience of racial and cultural/ethnic identity as it related to influencing women's coping process. African American participants referred to race and ethnicity/culture together, while African women referred primarily to culture in describing

their experience. Further, this salience of either race or culture/ethnicity varied within these sub-groups – for example, Rawhiya spoke only to ethnicity when describing her identity while Naila spoke directly to her racial and ethnic identity in describing her experience. Racial and ethnic identity development theories have been conceptualized by scholars (Cross, 1991; Phinny, 1989). It is possible that participants not raised in the United States do not see race in the same way that women born in the United States do, and thus do not see a direct connection between racism and their experience. It was because of these potential differences in the salience of race that I adopted a "thin" conceptualization of blackness (Shelby, 2009), in which "black" is defined as the racial category that is imposed by society, not a deeper, cultural one. For example, in her member check, Asiya offered an explanation for why race was not salient to her. She explained that as a first generation immigrant, she was not raised in a society in which racism was present and was taught pride in her culture. However, when asked about gender, she went on to describe that she was raised in a patriarchal society, and therefore sexism and gender socialization shaped her responses and were quite apparent to her. Gender was a unifying construct for women in this study, and both sub-groups of women raised in societies in which patriarchy and gender inequality is prevalent. Their experiences as women were more similar than their experiences as black women. This presents a possible limitation of a solely gendered analysis as compared to an intersectional one, as one may miss variations as it relates to other social identity constructs, such as race and culture.

Both women who were born into the Islam religion and those who reverted to Islam described how religious teachings shaped their experience. However, reverts described how by trying to please Allah by pleasing their husband, they were misled about the religion. Both Jamilah and Naila, described how being a revert to Islam made them "naïve" and thus left them

vulnerable to abuse. Eventually both women learned more about their faith and reinterpreted their understanding of being GMW. Renegotiating religious identity is also supported by research. In a study that examined American Muslim women's experiences leaving abusive relationships, a similar phenomenon occurred for participants. Survivors found "[a]sserting their right to interpret Islam independently was part of [their] healing process—a process of reclaiming the self" (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001, p.429).

a. <u>Religious teachings</u>

Relatedly, religious teachings shaped participants' gender socialization. However, there was diversity in religious interpretation among participants. For example, Naila's experience as a revert initially led her to be particularly vulnerable to misconstrued teachings. In contrast, Asiya never understood that her role as a Muslim woman was one in which she was forced to submit to her husband. Additionally, Asiya was active in her religious learning, and she described a lecture she heard about a verse in the Qur'an that is sometimes used to justify abuse. Specifically, she cited verse 4:34 from the Qur'an, the interpretation of which has been contested. One English translation of the verse reads[4]:

> Men are the maintainers (of the affairs) of women, for God has preferred in bounty one of them over the other, and for what they spend (to sustain them) from their own wealth. Thus, righteous women are devoutly obedient, safeguarding (their sacred trusts) in the absence (of their husbands). For God has ordained (such trusts) to be safeguarded. So as to those (wives) whose (flagrant) defiance you fear, you shall admonish them. And, (should they persist), part with them in bed. And (should they persist) strike them (with a light hand). But if they obey you, then do not seek (to go) against them in any way. Indeed, God is ever exalted, all great.

[4] Translation from "The Gracious Quran: Arabic-English Parallel Edition (A Modern Phrased Interpretation in English)" by Ahmad Zaki Hammad

Religious and social science scholars have offered various interpretations in which they clarify this verse and its meaning (Ibrahim & Abdalla, 2008; Abugideiri, 2012). Abugideiri (2012) provides further insight to the issue explaining that,

> Scholars have differed about the meanings of key individual words in the verse, leading to interpretations that range from permitting the husband to use a gentle tap when his wife has not responded to the first two steps (talking to her, then sleeping separately) to suggesting that husbands separate from their wives when there has been no positive response to the first two steps (p. 311-312).

In addition, it is well documented that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never hit his wives even in the most difficult times of marriage, a significant point as his life serves as the primary example for Muslims for how to live by the teachings of the Qur'an.

Participants' understanding of religious teachings influenced their coping process, a finding supported by the literature. In a literature review examining domestic violence service seeking among American Muslim women, I (2016) found that a woman's religious perceptions of abuse could either hinder or facilitate her seeking domestic violence services. In a quantitative study of Arab American, predominately Muslim, women, 43.3% of participants indicated that "their religion discouraged them from seeking outside help" for domestic violence (Abu-Ras, 2003, p. 43). While participants in the present study did not explicitly state this same sentiment, they did point to messages that they should stay in the relationship, thus leading most to endure prolonged abuse.

F. Strengths

I employed a number of strategies to ensure the trustworthiness, authenticity, and quality of the study. One such strategy was member checking, a technique that is used to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative studies (Charmaz, 2006; Oktay, 2012). After completing data analysis, I shared major findings with three participants, two of whom identified as African

American and one who identified as West African, to get their feedback on how well the findings reflected their experiences (Charmaz, 2006).

I also engaged in memo writing throughout data collection and analysis. A form of bracketing (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Tufford & Newman, 2012), this strategy helped me to note insights and hunches that later informed my core categories. This strategy was particularly useful during open coding when I wanted to focus on developing substantive codes – when I came across ideas that were theoretical in nature, I created a memo and revisited the memo in later stages of data analysis.

Another concern of the quality of qualitative research is that of its transferability (Miles et al., 2014). I employed two strategies to ensure transferability: theoretical sampling and connecting my findings to existing theories. In addition to maintaining a code book (Hennink et al., 2011), I also kept a record of changes I made to codes after categories were established.

As an insider to the community in which I recruited participants, it was necessary that I bracketed my own biases and assumptions when analyzing data and making conclusions about the findings. I sought advice from "community consultants" – those who have insight into the culture and religious beliefs of the participants— as a way for me to maintain some level of objectivity as opposed to me assuming what participants intended. For example, when I came across the use of voodoo, I consulted with members of the West African Muslim community about how to interpret this concept. I did not provide consultants with access to the data or details of specific participants; rather I asked about concepts for which I needed further clarification.

Another strength of this study was that while it was cross-sectional in nature, I was able to capture women's reports of how they changed at different stages in their life by asking them to

reflect on their past experiences. Aiding in this was that five of the six women completed follow-up interviews. The data collected in the two interviews allowed for rich data collection, as participants were given opportunities to expand and clarify ideas expressed in the previous interview. Having an initial and follow-up interview also served to help participants recall past events. Additionally, I was able to ask theoretical questions that emerged after the first interview.

Another strength of this study was the ethnic diversity of the sample. The inclusion of West African and African American women allowed me to examine how their diversity differentially shaped experience.

Lastly, a strength of this study is that it provided insight into how to study intersectionality and how intersectionality shapes experience using empirical evidence. It provided the vehicle that connects intersectionality to coping by giving a name to the phenomena, the Good Muslim Woman, and then connecting it to gender socialization and its intersection of other aspects of identity.

G. Limitations

There are limitations to the present study due to its design. One such limitation was that all the participants had left their abusive relationships. While this eligibility requirement allowed for the development of a leaving pathway, this pathway should be considered preliminary and in need of further study as it is likely that women who are currently in abusive relationships will have different interpretations of their experience than those who have left. Another limitation of including only women who had left their abusive relationships was that I was unable to capture the differences in the types of strategies participants used before and after they realized they were experiencing domestic violence. Participants spoke of knowing the difference, but in

talking about individual instances of violence, it was not always clear if women were talking about pre- or post-awareness, as participants were viewing their experiences from their current status.

Relatedly, a goal of this study was to make a clear connection between identity and the coping process. The nascent GMW theory situates black Muslim women's identity constructions within the social environment and provides an introductory explanation to social identity's influence on domestic violence response. A limitation of this study was that I was only able to develop a preliminary pathway to describe the link between identity and coping processes. Specifically, beyond identifying the nuances of participants' responses, I could make no definitive conclusions about what interpretations of identity led to the use of which types of strategies, or which types of strategies led to which types of outcomes. However, this study provides the foundation for further examination of this question.

Other limitations concerned sampling. There is ideological diversity in Islam in the form of various sects. All study participants could be categorized as "Sunni" Muslim. As with group classifications, there is diversity within the Sunni sect. However, the study lacked discernable ideological diversity due to all participants belonging to the same sect. It is not clear if those who identify with other sects such as the Nation of Islam or Shia would have and express different experiences or attribute different interpretations of their religious identity to their coping process.

Another limitation of the sample is that all participants were recruited from Chicago. As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, recruitment was limited to Chicago due to the feasibility. Chicago is a particular context; the Muslim community is large and diverse, and it is not clear if similar findings would emerge in other locales. For example, having access to services and the

existence of a large Muslim community may have shaped women's coping strategies and their outcomes.

Additionally, I faced a number of challenges both in recruiting my sample and in seeking an ethnically diverse sample. The initial goal for the study was to recruit a minimum of 10 participants, but it took a calendar year to recruit 6, with most participants being recruited around the Muslim holy month of Ramadan when Muslims more often attend the mosque. This limitation influenced the extent saturation could be reached and the development of the comparative dimensions, and some potential dimensions could not be fully explored. Lastly, while the study did capture some ethnic diversity, the sample was not representative of the ethnic diversity of black Muslim women. For example, East African women are a significant population of American Muslims not included in the sample.

H. Implications and Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study has implications for social work practice and education, policy, community and future research.

1. Social work practice

While participants reported receiving good support from social services, they were hesitant to use them. Agency initiatives that involve partnering with religious communities could help to demystify the use of domestic violence services and counseling. Given the intersectional nature of women's realities, services that attend to some of the comparative dimensions mentioned, such as immigration status concerns, are necessary. Additionally, participants sought help from family and friends before seeking help from more formal forms of assistance; thus, the maintenance and further establishment of initiatives that deliver bystander/first responder trainings to the community are especially needed.

Participants spoke of feeling empowered to share their stories for the potential benefit of helping others facing the same struggle. Social work practice should consider interventions that involve peer-training as an educational tool for women and communities, but also peer-support for those who have experienced violence. Such interventions could be healing for both those who have overcome domestic violence and those who are experiencing it.

2. Social work education

Social work places emphasis on cultural competence and understanding the diverse needs of individuals. This study provides valuable insight into the experiences of black Muslim women, and this content should be implemented in Human Behavior and the Social Environment courses. Additionally, incorporating literature on black Muslim women in elective courses on domestic violence would highlight the diversity of experiences and needs of survivors.

Additionally, lessons learned from this study could be beneficial in social research courses. In doing this study I had to navigate between being an insider of the community and recruiting subject for a sensitive research topic. This experience could be valuable education on how to conduct ethical community based research, particularly as it relates to insider/outsider considerations and recruitment.

3. Policy

The use of the legal system and related policies serve to curb violence but not end it. The outcomes women described call into question the reliability of the criminal justice system as a solution to domestic violence. Future research should examine how and under what conditions domestic violence actually stops, and to what extent the legal system effects these

outcomes. Additionally, this study could be used to inform police training on domestic violence and the intersecting concerns women have about seeking police assistance.

4. Community

Seeking help from the religious community was found to have inconsistent results. Maryam Funches (2007) presented a model for how to address domestic violence at the community level that includes trainings and creating spaces for survivors to seek help for abuse, economic support, and counseling. Sharing the findings from this study could be a useful first step toward implementing this model and in creating initiatives and supporting trainings that educate community leaders and members about domestic violence.

5. Future Research

This study's findings have the potential to inform research on domestic violence coping. The congruence of participants' coping strategies with the IPVSI is promising, as it shows the potential for the scale to be utilized in future studies with this population. My study also reveals how some slight modifications may need to be made to the IPVSI measure, such as incorporating the use of spirituality, to capture the full range of women's strategies.

Another major finding of this study was that women's strategies were part of an overall leaving process. Other studies have attempted to understand women's process for leaving relationships using transtheoretical stages of change as a lens (Khaw & Hardesty, 2007), and others have examined how factors such as trauma and coping strategies shape the leaving process (Lerner & Kennedy, 2000). Future research should investigate black Muslim women's process of leaving, examining how women transition from leaving and what factors shape this decision making process. The present study supports literature that finds women leave an abusive relationship multiple times before deciding to leave it permanently. Thus, studying the leaving

pathway and examining what motivates women to permanently leave and what motivates them to return, could be a particularly useful empirical question that could lead to the development of intervention, and possibly prevention, strategies.

This study gave rise to comparative dimensions that highlighted the diversity of the black Muslim women and empirical studies around these dimensions could provide insight to the experiences and needs of this and other groups of women. Future research should examine the experiences of revert women and how their experiences and perceptions of abuse may or may not be qualitatively different from those who were raised as Muslims. Additionally, future studies among Muslim women should compare and contrast the extent to which immigration effects coping strategies, and if these strategies differ based on type of immigration status (i.e. first generation green card holder, student visa status, undocumented, etc.). Relatedly, how coping is influence by length of time in the United States and acculturation should also be explored. Another comparative dimension was that of marriage type. Future studies that compare and contrast domestic violence prevalence and severity by marriage type are needed. Ting and Panchanadeswaran (2009) found that African women in polygynous marriages feared stigmatization if they sought help for domestic violence. While participants in the present study did not report this, studies that examine stigmatization and barriers to help-seeking should also explore marriage type as a factor.

Participants reported mixed outcomes when seeking help through their religious communities. There are well-known efforts in the American Muslim community aimed at educating religious leaders and community members on domestic violence, including Peaceful Family Project, KARAMAH, and Project Sakinah. Future studies should examine the effectiveness of these initiatives in improving religious leaders' responses, reducing rates of

violence in the Muslim community, and increasing awareness and knowledge of domestic violence among community members.

Lastly, a major finding of this study connected women's responses to their conceptualization of "goodness". Future research that examines how being good is conceptualized among other groups, both religious and non-religious, could provide insight into how societal expectations may shape help-seeking behavior and other coping strategies.

I. Conclusion

In this study, I sought to understand the link between identity and domestic violence response among an understudied population, black Muslim women. Through this investigation, I uncovered the various ways in which women navigated their identities to stay safe, and how they strove, in spite of everything, to be good to themselves, their families, their children, and their God. The manifestation of the Good Muslim Woman as a nascent theory highlights the role of the social environment on women's experience of violence, and gives some insight into how human beings negotiate morality and where those messages come from. Further research should build on this premise, investigating how the messages people receive through socialization shape their coping with adversity.

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APPENDECIES

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APPENDIX A

ATTACHMENT A – INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Complete informed consent procedures.

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. I am conducting a study on women's responses to domestic violence, and I am trying to understand how identity influences how women respond to abuse. Particularly because my own identity and my experience working in the domestic violence field, I am curious about black Muslim women's experiences.

I will begin by asking questions about how you see your own identity, and then I will ask about your experiences of domestic violence. Keep in mind that you may stop the interview at any time or skip questions. I will be using a tape recorder to capture our conversation; however, if you would like me to stop recording at any point, let me know and we can continue without the recorder. Although I will be taking notes occasionally throughout the course of our conversation, if we stop recording but continue the interview, I will switch to taking notes more frequently to capture as much detail of our conversation as possible. The interview should last between 1.5-2 hours. Do you have any questions before we begin?

BEGIN RECORDING

Initial Open-ended Question

1) To begin, how would you describe your identity?

    a. Race? Nationality? Ethnicity? Culture? Religion? Gender?

Intermediate Questions

Thank you for all that you've shared so far. Next, I'd like to move into talking about your experiences of domestic violence by reflecting on two different incidences of abuse. These could be two examples within the same relationship or examples from different relationships.

I'll be asking details of the violence, what you were thinking at that time, and how you responded. Keep in mind that we can pause the interview at any time if you need to.

INCIDENT I

2) Reflect on the time when you first recognized there was abuse in a relationship. Can you tell me what happened?
    a. How did you know it was abuse?
    b. And how long were you in this relationship?
3) Women have reported that they respond to domestic violence in a wide variety of ways. What were some of the ways that you responded to this experience?
    a. What did you feel?
    b. What were some of the thoughts you had?
    c. What influenced your decision to respond in these ways?
4) You mentioned that you responded by_____. What happened when you responded in these ways?
    a. What did you hope would happen?
    b. Was the outcome what you expected or wanted?

INCIDENT II

5) Is there another incident of abuse that you can remember, whether it was in this relationship or another, that you can share with me?
    a. Did this occur in the same relationship you described previously or another?
        i. [If different relationship] And how long were you in this relationship?
    b. What happened in this incident?
    c. How did you know it was abuse?

6) What were some of the ways that you responded to this experience?
    a. What did you feel?
    b. What were some of the thoughts you had?
    c. What influenced your decision to respond in these ways?
7) You mentioned that you responded by_____. What happened when you responded in these ways?
    a. What did you hope would happen?
    b. Was the outcome what you expected or wanted?
8) You've told me about two incidences of violence and how you responded to them. Reflecting back on your experiences, what can you say about how you've changed over time?
    a. How did your responses change?
    b. Overall, what shaped your responses?
9) Consider the ways you responded to the abuse; what made it easier to respond in some ways than others?
    a. What barriers did you face in responding to domestic violence?
    b. What supports did you see?
10) We began by talking about how you describe yourself – how do you think your identity influenced how you responded to domestic violence?
    a. Were there aspects of your identity that made responding to the violence easy? Hard?

Ending Questions

11) Is there anything else that you would like to add, or is there anything that I did not ask about your experience that you feel I should know?

12) What advice would you have for other black Muslim women who are experiencing domestic violence in their intimate relationships?

13) What was it like to talk about these experiences?

STOP RECORDING.

Thank participant for their time and provide them with cash incentive and referral list.

Remind participant that they will be contacted for a follow-up interview and member-check.

Leave box empty - For office use only

APPENDIX B

ATTACHMENT B - FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thank you for meeting with me again today. The purpose of this interview is to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences you shared in our first interview.

As with the previous interview, I will record our conversation so that I can have accurate records of what we discuss. If at any time you would like to stop recording, please let me know. Additionally, if you'd like to pause the interview or stop for any reason, let me know and we can do that as well. Do you have any questions before we begin?

BEGIN RECORDING

1) How did you feel after our first interview?

2) I want to begin by allowing you to direct the conversation. Is there anything you wanted to address or expand upon from our first interview?

3) *OPEN: This question will be based on key points from the previous interview that I need clarification on or would like the participant to say more about to allow for further insight into analysis.*

4) Is there anything else you could share that would help me understand how your identity may have influenced your response?

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APPENDIX C

ATTACHMENT C - MEMBER CHECK INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thank you for meeting with me again today. The purpose of this interview is to get your feedback on the accuracy of the study findings.

As with the previous interviews, I will record our conversation so that I can have accurate records of what we discuss. If at any time you would like to stop recording, please let me know. Additionally, if you'd like to pause the interview or stop for any reason, let me know and we can do that as well. Do you have any questions before we begin?

BEGIN RECORDING

Explain core categories to participant

1) Do these findings reflect your experiences?

    a. What resonates with you in particular?

    b. What is missing or is incorrect?

2) Is there anything you would add, change, or clarify?

3) Do you have any questions about the findings?

APPENDIX D

ATTACHMENT D – STUDY INFORMATION CARD

The study information card is a 4” X 6” card stock. Study information will be included on the front of the card; please place approval stamp on the back.

FRONT

RESEARCH STUDY ON RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

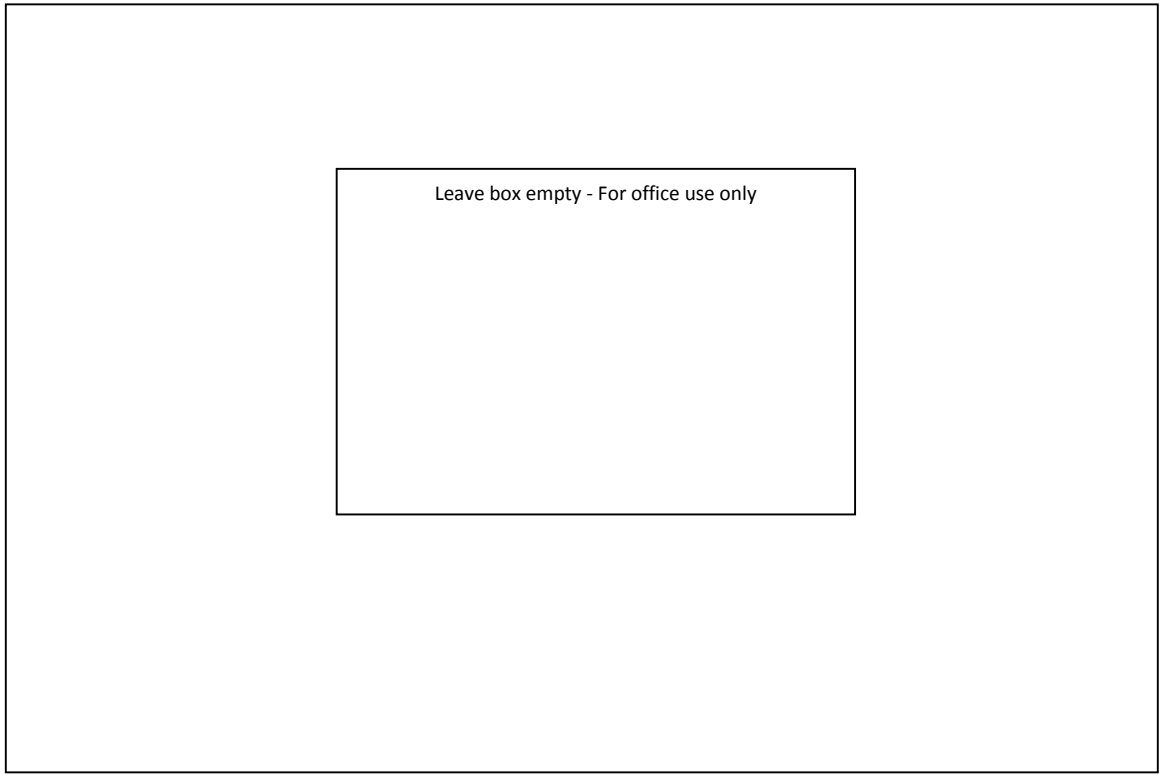
Are you a survivor of domestic violence? If you're a black (African, African American, Caribbean, etc.) Muslim woman who has experienced domestic violence in the past, I'd like to hear your story.

I am conducting research at the University of Illinois at Chicago about black Muslim women's responses to domestic violence (i.e. emotional abuse, physical/sexual abuse, financial abuse, etc.). Please help me by engaging in a series of interviews about your experiences.

The information you share will be kept confidential. Participants will be compensated up to $60 for their time.

If interested, please contact: Bunmi Basirat Oyewuwo-Gassikia
630-258-1342

BACK



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APPENDIX E

ATTACHMENT E - PHONE RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello, may I ask the purpose of your call? [OR if calling someone back: I received a call from _____. Can I first ask about the purpose of your call?]

Once potential participant confirms they are calling about the study:

Thank you for calling. I'd first like to tell you more about myself and the study. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the Jane Addams College of Social Work. I am conducting this study as my dissertation research. I am seeking to understand domestic violence in the Muslim community, focusing on how black Muslim women's identity influence how they respond to the violence they experience. Before moving forward, I'd like to confirm you are eligible for the study. Is it okay if I ask you some questions to see if you are eligible to participate in this study?

Complete the "Eligibility Checklist"

IF NOT ELIGIBLE: Thank you for your interest, but unfortunately, you are not eligible for the study. Although you do not meet the criteria for this study, I would like to provide you with a resource that may be useful to you. *Provide caller with the name and number of the Domestic Violence Help Line from the "Helpful Resources" list.*

IF ELIGIBLE: You qualify to participate in the study. Let me give you a few details about the study procedures. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete three interviews. The purpose of the first interview is to begin to explore your experiences and responses to domestic violence. I will ask questions about specific incidences of abuse and how you dealt with those experiences. This interview is expected to last between 1.5-2 hours.

The purpose of the second interview is to clarify ideas expressed in the initial interview and allow you to provide more detail and depth about information that is particularly relevant the research question I am trying to answer. This interview is expected to last1-1.5 hours.

The purpose of this final interview (also referred to as "member-check") is to get your feedback on the accuracy of the findings of the study. This interview is expected to last 1-1.5 hours.

You will be compensated for your participation. After the completion of each interview, you will receive a cash incentive. You have the opportunity to receive up to $60 over the course of your participation in the study.

If you would like to participate in this study, you can inform me now or later. If you decide to participate, we will arrange a time and place to meet for our first interview. I am willing to meet wherever you feel the most safe and comfortable. This can include a coffee shop, a library, or your home. If you would like, I can also arrange a private room for us at the Jane Addams College of Social Work at UIC.

If you would like time to think about it and need to inform me later, you may contact me at 630-258-1342 or ooyewu2@uic.edu. Do you have any questions?

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APPENDIX F

ATTACHMENT F - ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

Code number of potential participant (only if eligible): _____

Inclusion Criteria (Check all that apply; all criteria must be met for inclusion):

"Please answer yes or no to the following questions:

- ☐ Do you speak English?
- ☐ Are you a woman?
- ☐ Are you Muslim?
- ☐ Do you belong to a racially black ethnic group and/or self-identify as black?
- ☐ Have you experienced domestic violence in an intimate partner relationship as an adult (age 18 or older)?
- ☐ Were you Muslim at the time of the abusive relationship?
- ☐ Are you willing to talk about past abuse?"

Exclusion Criteria (Check all that apply; ***if yes to any, exclude from study)***

- ☐ "Are you currently in an abusive relationship?
- ☐ Will participating in this study affect your safety in any way?"

Eligibility Determination: ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**

Comments :

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APPENDIX G

ATTACHMENT G - ANSWERING MACHING SCRIPT

Hello,

You've reached Bunmi with the "Relationships Study" at 630-258-1342. This is a confidential voicemail box. Please leave your name, a brief message, and a phone number, and I will get back to you shortly. Thank you.

Leave box empty - For office use only

APPENDIX H

ATTACHMENT H - HELPFUL RESOURCES

Domestic Violence Resources

Domestic Violence Help Line (Chicago)
Phone: 1-877-863-6338
TTY: 1-877-863-6339

Hamdard Center for Health and Human Services
1-866-305-3933
www.hamdardcenter.org

Domestic Violence Services: Crisis line, Shelter, Transitional Housing

Other Services: Primary Care & Mental Health, Family Preservation, Adult Day Services for Seniors, Youth Services, Case Management & Employment Services, Community Outreach & Education

Apna Ghar
1-800-717-0757
www.apnaghar.org

Services:

24-Hour Hotline; Emergency Shelter; Transitional Housing; Counseling; Legal Advocacy; Supervised Child Visitation and Safe Exchange Center

Connections for Abused Women and Their Children
773-278-4566
http://cawc.org/

Services: Shelter, Counseling, Advocacy, and 24-hour hotline

Other Resources

Sisters Nurturing Sisters
Dorothy "Habibah" Collins (312) 833-5894
Husain Abdul Aziz (312) 636-6640
www.sistersnurturingsisters.org

Services: direct services – food, clothing, temporary housing, financial assistance; life skills; indirect services.

Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN)
773-434-4626
www.imancentral.org

Services: Free community health clinic; transitional housing for formerly incarcerated men; youth empowerment and leadership development program; arts and culture programming

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APPENDIX I

ATTACHMENT I - SNOWBALL SAMPLING SCRIPT

Script for asking participant to distribute "Study Information Cards" to potential participants

Thank you again for taking time to complete the interview and participating in the study. I am recruiting people to help spread the word to those who might be eligible. If you know any other black Muslim women who have experienced domestic violence who may be willing to share their story and participate in this study, would you feel comfortable giving them this information card?

To respect their privacy and confidentiality, please do not share the participants' name or information with me. If they are interested, just let them know to contact me. Please also note that I will not be able to tell you if they do or do not enroll in the study as I want to respect everyone's right to privacy and confidentiality.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you again for your help.

Leave box empty - For office use only

APPENDIX J

ATTACHMENT J - University of Illinois at Chicago
Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research
"The Influence of Identity on Domestic Violence Response: A Study of Black Muslim Women"

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Olubunmi Basirat Oyewuwo-Gassikia, Doctoral Candidate
Department and Institution: Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago
Address and Contact Information: 1040 W Harrison, MC309, Chicago, IL 60607, ooyewu2@uic.edu

Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to be a subject in a research study about domestic violence in the Muslim community. I am exploring black Muslim women's experiences of domestic violence (i.e. emotional abuse, physical/sexual abuse, financial abuse, etc.) and how they responded to such experiences.

You have been asked to participate in the research because you have identified yourself as a racially black Muslim woman who is a survivor of domestic violence.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the University of Illinois at Chicago or the agency you are currently seeking services from (if applicable). **If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.**

Approximately 10-12 subjects may be involved in this research at UIC.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to understand how black Muslim women's identity influences their response to domestic violence. This study will be the first to focus exclusively on black Muslim women's experiences of domestic violence and the first to examine how identity influences how black Muslim women respond to domestic violence.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to engage in the following study procedures:

1. An initial interview. The purpose of this interview is to begin to explore your experiences and responses to domestic violence. I will ask questions about specific incidences of abuse and how you dealt with those experiences. This interview is expected to last between 1.5-2 hours.

2. Follow-up interview. The purpose of this interview is to clarify ideas expressed in the initial interview and allow you to provide more detail and depth about information that is particularly relevant the research question I am trying to answer. This interview will occur approximately two weeks after your initial interview. This interview is expected to last1-1.5 hours.

3. Member-check. The purpose of this final interview (member-check) is to get your feedback on the accuracy of the findings of the study. The member-check will take place a few months after the follow-up interview. This interview is expected to last 1-1.5 hours.

   All interviews will be conducted in-person at a location and time of your choosing. Interviews will be audio taped. You do have the option of declining that your interview be recorded.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

Due to the personal and sensitive nature of the topic of domestic violence, there is a possibility that you will experience emotional or psychological discomfort. Please keep in mind that we can pause or stop the interview at anytime. If you become distressed and/or concerned about your safety, a crisis plan will be activated and that may include contacting a health care professional. If you are in need of immediate care I will call 911.

A possible risk of the research is that your participation in the research or information about you might become known to individuals outside the research.

Although you have self-identified as a survivor of domestic violence and that you believe that you are no longer at risk for abuse, please keep in mind that there may be the chance of

retaliation from a former partner if they discover your involvement in the study. To mitigate this risk, the interview will be conducted in a place that feels safe and comfortable to you. Additionally, I will not disclose to anyone that you are enrolled in the study.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

This study is not designed to benefit you directly. However, the study has the potential to benefit the American Muslim community by raising awareness of domestic violence, how to address it, and the needs of women experiencing it. Additionally, the study has potential to advance social work practice, policy, and education.

What other options are there?

You have the option to not participate in this study.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

The people who will know that you are a research participant are the principal investigator, the faculty sponsor, and potentially a hired transcription service that will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Otherwise information about you will only be disclosed to others with your written permission, or if necessary to protect your rights or welfare or if required by law.

Study information which identifies you and the consent form signed by you may be examined and/or copied review by the UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects and State of Illinois auditors.

I am currently a board member of Sisters Nurturing Sisters, an organization that works with homeless women and their children, but your information will not be shared with other board members or the agency. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relationships with the agency/organization.

I would like to audio-record the interviews for accuracy. In addition, I will take brief notes during the interview. You will not be asked any identifying information during the interview and should any identifying information be disclosed, it will be deleted during the transcription process. Only the researcher (and potentially a transcription service) will have access to the audio files and interview transcripts. All subject information forms and eligibility checklists will be stored in locked file cabinets separate from the transcripts. All electronic data files will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected computer that only the principal investigator has access to. The audio file of your interview will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Only the principal investigator and potentially a transcription service will have access to these audio files.

A subject contact information sheet linking your name to your assigned participant ID and pseudonym will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room separate from any study data. This sheet will be used to contact you for member checks. I will destroy transcripts and the subject contact sheet 6 months after member checks have been completed.

Information you provide during the interview may be quoted directly in the findings of the study without identifying information. You will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name) of your choosing during the interviews that will be linked to your data. The researcher's dissertation committee, comprised of faculty supervising the study, will have access to the data only linked by the pseudonym.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

If you disclose actual or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child, or disabled or elderly adult, the researcher must, and will, report this to Child Protective Services (i.e. Department of Family and Human Services), Adult Protective Services, and/or the nearest law enforcement agency.

What are the costs for participating in this research?

There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?

You will receive compensation for each completed interview. If you do not finish the study, you will be compensated for the interviews you have completed. If you complete all interviews (3 – initial, follow-up, and member-check), you will receive a total of $60. You will receive your payment immediately following the completion of each interview.

Payment schedule: After the first interview, you will receive $15. After the follow-up interview, you will receive $20. Lastly, after the member-check, you will receive $25.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. You may also refuse to answer questions that you do not feel comfortable with or stop the interview at any time.

In the event you withdraw or are asked to leave the study, you will still be compensated as described above.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

Contact the researcher Olubunmi Basirat Oyewuwo-Gassikia at 713-857-5494* or ooyewu2@uic.edu or her faculty sponsor, Patricia O'Brien at 312-996-2203 or pob@uic.edu if you have any questions about this study, your participation, and/or if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research.

If you are in need of domestic violence resources, please call the Chicago Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-877-863-6338.

Remember:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Signature of Research Participant

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____

Printed Name

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date (must be same as subject's)

_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

I give my permission to have all my interviews audio-tape recorded.

Agree ☐ **Decline** ☐

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____

Printed Name

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date (must be same as subject's)

_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

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APPENDIX K

ATTACHMENT K – BRIEF PRESENTATION SCRIPT

Assalaamu Alaikum! *(translation: Peace and blessings be upon you)*

My name is Bunmi Basirat Oyewuwo-Gassikia, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the Jane Addams College of Social Work. I'm conducting my dissertation research on domestic violence, and I am currently recruiting participants for the study. I'm seeking to understand domestic violence in the American Muslim community, focusing on racially black women's experiences of and responses to domestic violence. This includes Africans, African Americans, Caribbeans, and all others who identify with the racial category of "black". While research studies on domestic violence in the American Muslim community are increasing, there is still a lot we don't know. My hope is that this study not only increases our understanding and awareness of domestic violence, but also helps to inform procedures for how we as a community respond to domestic violence.

I'm interviewing women who have experienced domestic violence in the past and are now out of domestic violence situations. Domestic violence could include emotional abuse, physical or sexual abuse, financial abuse, amongst other types. The study is confidential, and I will not reveal to anyone that you or someone you know is enrolled in the study. I'll be handing out information cards, so if you are interested in the study, please contact me for more details. If you know someone who might be interested, share the information card with her so she can contact me directly to find out more. All study participants will be compensated for their time. If you have any questions, feel free to ask me one-on-one.

If you are currently in need of domestic violence resources, please call the Chicago Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-877-863-6338.

Jazak Allah Khair! *(translation: May God reward you with goodness)*

VITA

NAME:	Olubunmi Basirat Oyewuwo-Gassikia
EDUCATION:	BSW, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, 2007
	MSSW, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, 2009
	PhD, Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago, Illinois, 2017
TEACHING:	Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago, Human Behavior and the Social Environment (Fall 2014, 2016) Critical Social Work in a Multicultural Society (Spring 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017)
HONORS:	**Presenter Travel Award**, University of Illinois at Chicago, Graduate Student Council, 2015
	Dr. Paula Allen-Meares Scholarship for UIC DSW Students, National Association of Black Social Workers, 2015
	Martin Luther King Scholarship, UIC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, 2014-2015
	Abraham Lincoln Fellowship, UIC Graduate College, 2013-2014
PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP:	Council on Social Work Education Society for Social Work Research
PUBLICATIONS:	**Oyewuwo-Gassikia, O.B.** (2016). American Muslim women and domestic violence service seeking: A Literature Review. *Affilia, 31*(4), 450-462. doi:10.1177/0886109916654731
PRESENTATIONS:	**Oyewuwo-Gassikia, O. B**., Okonkwor, O., Steigman, P.J., & Cook, J.A. (2016) Collaborative Research in Self-Directed Care: Exploring the Impact of Bursary Programs. Poster presented at UIC Department of Psychiatry 7th Annual Research Forum.
	Oyewuwo-Gassikia, O. B. (2016) Addressing Domestic Violence in the Muslim Community: A Re-Introduction to the Funches Model. Paper presented at the First International Congress on Religious-Spiritual Counseling and Care. Istanbul, Turkey.
	Oyewuwo-Gassikia, O. B. (2016) Utilization of the Criminal Justice System for Domestic Violence: Exploring Motivations, Perceptions, and Outcomes. Paper presented at the Muslim Mental Health Conference.

Dearborn, MI.

Oyewuwo-Gassikia, O. B. (2016) Bridging Identity and Coping: The Experiences of Black Muslim Survivors of Domestic Violence. Poster presented at the Society for Social Work Research 20th Annual Conference. Washington, DC.

Oyewuwo-Gassikia, O. B. (2015) Using Intersectionality and Coping as a Framework for Examining Survivors' Responses to Domestic Violence: Bridging Psychological Concerns with the Structural Reality. Paper presented at the Muslim Mental Health Conference. Dearborn, MI.

Oyewuwo-Gassikia, O. B. (2013) Intersectionality and Domestic Violence: Understanding American Muslim Women. Paper presented at the Midwest ECO Conference (Theme: Equity, Power, and Progress: Understanding and Changing Systems to Promote Social Justice). Chicago, IL.

Oyewuwo-Gassikia, O. B. (2013). Lost But Not Forgotten: The Case of the International Violence Against Women Act. Paper presented at The Conable Conference in International Studies (Theme: Gender, Violence, and Justice in the Age of Globalization). Rochester, NY.

Oyewuwo-Gassikia, O. B. (2013). Domestic Violence, Culture, and Islam: The Needs of Survivors in the American Muslim Community. Paper presented at the Annual National Conference of the National Association for African American Studies & Affiliates. Baton Rouge, LA.

PRACTICE EXPERIENCE:

Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA), Houston, Texas
Battering Intervention & Prevention Program (BIIP) Group Facilitator, 2010-2011

New Horizon Family Center, Baytown, Texas
Legal Advocate, 2009-2010

Resources For Living, Austin, Texas
EAP Client Support Specialist, 2008

National Association of Social Workers/TX Chapter, Austin, Texas,
BSW Intern, 2007

Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, Austin, Texas
BSW Intern, 2007